MARTIN RUTER

ERNEST ASHTON SMITH

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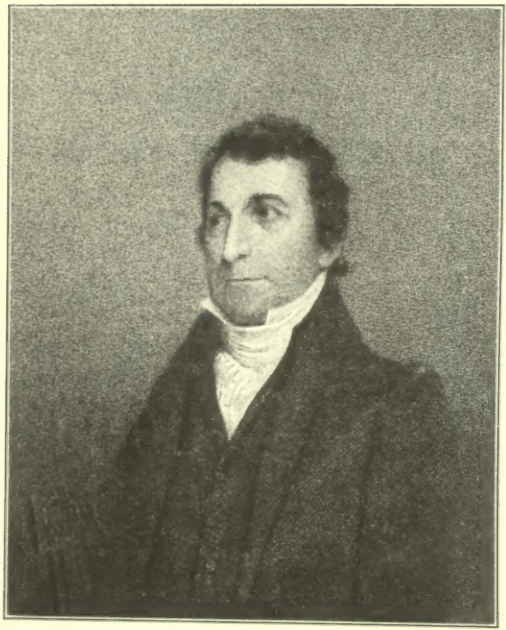

MARTIN RUTER

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By

ERNEST ASHTON SMITH

THE METHODIST BOOK CONCERN

NEW YORK CINCINNATI

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To

BISHOP EDWIN HOLT HUGHES

IN

PLEASANT REMEMBRANCE

OF

OHIO WESLEYAN DAYS

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FOREWORD

In the Autobiography of Dan Young, speaking of early days in New Hampshire with Martin Ruter, there occurs this observation: "For some strange reason the history of this great, good, and distinguished man of God is much neglected, and although one of the most thorough, successful, and worthy theologians of the New World, yet the memory of his worthy deeds seems likely to be in a great measure lost." The accurate historian of Methodism, Abel Stevens, once himself a missionary to Texas, has made appreciative and frequent mention in several works of the activities of Dr. Ruter. The most extensive, though brief, account of his life has been written by his daughter, Mrs. S. R. Campbell, and appears in Summer's Sketches of Eminent Itinerant Ministers. The minutes of several Conferences contain the official record of his services for the kingdom of God. In his generation his name was as ointment poured forth in very many Methodist communities. It is a labor of love to bring this tribute, imperfect though it be, to the memory of the Rev. Martin Ruter, D.D.

CHAPTER I

THE YOUTHFUL ITINERANT

THE apostolic Fathers of Methodism in America of the era of Francis Asbury were conspicuous for versatility and vigor of achievement. In those bygone days of primitive conditions, they were men of marvelous mobility. The senior superintendent in his forty-three years of ministry covered the expanding areas incessantly, crossing the Alleghanies sixty times. Bishop Hedding jaunts from the Genesee Conference to Georgia with horse and sulky and in twelve years travels forty thousand miles.

Nothing of sectionalism marked that early Methodism. Jesse Lee, the Virginian, became the apostle of New England; Joshua Soule, of Maine, the apologist of the pro-slavery region, transferred in the division of 1844 to the episcopacy of the Church South. The paramount concern of every itinerant was to preach the gospel. There was a lively, realizing sense of the wrath to come. The evangelistic seed yielded its fruit in an increase of communicants from six hundred in 1772 to fifteen thousand in 1784, and six hundred thousand in 1833.

The march of Methodism combined a succession of ministries to the frontiers with the occupation of the older settled regions. This enlarging Church called forth a variety of functions to serve its complex interests, and in the providence of God a leadership was not lacking, that perfected its peculiar ecclesiastical organization and its sustaining agencies.

Among these Makers of Methodism Martin Ruter held a worthy place as itinerant, pioneer, missionary, educator, author, and practical Christian statesman. Bishop Simpson in the Hundred Years of Methodism, describing the few men of creative minds who in the second decade of the nineteenth century became leaders in their respective spheres and gave breadth and energy to connectional movements, has named six: Joshua Soule, John Emory, and Elijah Hedding, bishops of Methodism; Nathan Bangs, the church historian and editor; Wilbur Fisk, the first president of Wesleyan University; and Martin Ruter. The career of this sixth leader was rounded out in the comparatively brief span of thirty-six years. His untimely demise at the age of fifty-three in the full flood of the busiest activities of all his years has frequently been the occasion of fertile conjec-

ture as to what greater triumphs Dr. Ruter might have attained had he been spared the allotted three score and ten.

Martin Ruter was born in Charlton, Worcester County, Massachusetts, April 3, 1785. He was the son of Job Ruter, a blacksmith, known for his honesty and industry, a deeply pious man. The family moved to Bradford, Vermont, in 1793, and thence to Corinth in 1798. The parents were in early life members of the Baptist Church, but they united with the first Methodist class formed in their Vermont neighborhood. In fact, the home of Job Ruter was a place for preaching, and its hospitality was always open to all itinerants. In his autobiography Martin Ruter records that when not more than three years of age he had serious impressions, and these increased with years until 1799, when he resolved to devote his life to religion. His intimate friend, the Rev. Laban Clark, says there was nothing remarkable in Martin's first experience. He was diffident and retiring, but with his accustomed modesty there was a stability and gravity which was uncommon for his age, as he was only in his fifteenth year.

The school advantages of the youth were meager, and in the following winter the

deeply formative influence of his life came while he was studying at Bradford. Here he took board with Mrs. Peckett, an English lady whose maiden name was Margaret Appleton, and who had been the housekeeper for John Wesley. Moreover, in England she had been the bandmate of Miss Bosanquet, afterward Mrs. Fletcher of Madeley. Naturally, she was deeply versed in Christian experience and had in her home most of the works of Wesley. She was a true mother in Israel to Martin, whom she advised and encouraged in his religious experience and duty, and taught the peculiar forms and usages of the founder of Methodism. The home of Mrs. Peckett, like that of the Ruters, was the gathering place for Methodist preachers.

Upon young Ruter's return to Corinth he was laboring deeply under the conviction of offering himself for the Christian ministry, but the greatness of the work and his unpreparedness for the undertaking made him feel that the step was one to be taken only in the distant future. In September, 1800, the Quarterly Meeting for the circuit was held in Vershire. The Rev. John Broadhead, a giant of early Methodism in New England, was the presiding elder. The congregation was so large that

no building could hold it, and preaching took place in a grove near at hand. As the people thronged about the house the boy of fifteen appeared at a window and exhorted the company. His friend Clark writes: "His soul seemed fired with an affectionate and holy zeal for the conversion of the people; his language flowed with a manly eloquence. The multitude without wept and there was a great shout within, while all marveled to hear such words from one so young." The elder preached with great power and the results were typical of those days of direct, effective appeal. Two scores of persons who had cried out in penitence in the progress of the sermon were lying on the ground, prone as the slain of a battle.

Abel Stevens in the pages of his Memorials of Methodism tells the graphic story of the call to the itinerancy: "Mr. Broadhead at the conclusion of the meeting came to Martin and threw his arms around him and said, 'Martin, I want you to go with me,' to which he replied with childlike simplicity, 'If my father will let me, I will go.' On going into the house, the elder went to Mr. Ruter, saying, 'You must let Martin go with me,' to which he objected, on account of his being too young. 'But,' said

the elder, 'he has got the broad-ax, and he must go and hew down the forest.' The father made many other objections which the elder obviated, until the old gentleman consented and agreed to fit him out for the journey in two weeks. Mr. Broadhead returned to Martin and informed him that his father had given his consent, and he must be ready in two weeks to go with him around the district. The young man was taken by surprise and the thought rushed into his mind, 'He will set me to preaching, and I am not sure that God has called me to the work; and it will be a terrible thing for me to run before I am sent.' He was greatly affected and so distressed that he retired in secret, and, with his Bible in his hand, he fell upon his knees and struggled in prayer for direction; then he opened his Bible and the first sentence that struck his eye was this: 'The Master is come and calleth for thee.' These words were accompanied with such an evidence of his call to the work of the ministry that, with a flood of tears, he answered, 'I will go.'

"When his mother learned the arrangement she seemed irreconcilable and went to the presiding elder and asked, with much earnestness: 'What are you doing? How

can you think of setting that child to preaching? It cannot, it must not be; he is but a child, and it will be his ruin.' Brother Broadhead heard her, and, with his accustomed good humor, said, 'Sister, hold your peace; the Lord hath need of him and he must go.' Seeing she could gain nothing by her remonstrance, she left him and betook herself to her closet. With agonized feelings she opened the Bible, and the words she first read were, 'Loose him and let him go.' Her spirit suddenly became tranquil, and she was enabled to say, 'Lord, he is thine; and I give him to thee, and the work to which thou hast called him.'"

The district of the presiding elder was the New London, of the New York Conference, which extended from Connecticut through Massachusetts and Vermont to Canada. Young Ruter joined himself to the elder and was closely associated for three months, receiving instruction in divinity. It was a period of brief but precious guidance. The Rev. John Broadhead was a man of strong character and tireless energy. He was powerful in prayer and exhortation, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. He possessed sound judgment, was fearless in the face of opposition, and a minister eminently suited to his times. His

counsels and affectionate regard through the years bore rich fruitage in the life and services of this son of the gospel. After receiving license to preach, Martin during the winter and spring of 1801 was assigned to travel with the Rev. John Nichols on the Wethersfield Circuit, Vermont. It was a year of great refreshing in Eastern Methodism. Jesse Lee, in his Short History of Methodists, writing of the New London District, says, "There was a greater work of the Lord in the conversion of souls in that part of New England than had ever been known among the Methodists in those parts of the country." New Hampshire doubled its membership in 1800 and Vermont increased fifty per cent.

The chief work of the young licentiate was at the town of Athens. Asa Kent has given a piquant account of the first Methodist preaching here the previous year:

"There were no regular religious meetings in the place, though the Congregationalists had a small church and were in want of a minister. A local preacher by the name of Ashur Smith learning there was no clergyman in Athens, called on Deacon Rawson and professed to be a preacher of the gospel. The deacon, considering this providential, asked him to fill the pulpit,

and he gave such satisfaction that he was engaged for a year. But before the time expired it was cautiously whispered around that Smith was a Methodist. This passed with some as a downright slander, but, the reports continuing, an interview took place with the deacon, as follows:

"'It is told, Mr. Smith, that you're a Methodist!'

"'Well, sir, it is true.'

"'Why did you not tell us, at first, what church you belonged to?'

"'Because you never asked me a word about it.'

"'But you have deceived us.'

"'You know, Deacon, that when I came among you I professed to be a minister of the gospel of Christ; as such I have labored among you; and now permit me to ask if you, and the church, have not been satisfied with the doctrine you have heard.'

"'I have heard no complaint about that; but the Methodists hold to dreadful errors!'

"'Believe me, sir, I have preached to you every point of doctrine which the Methodists believe necessary to salvation. My object has been to benefit the people, and not to make a party. I did not think it proper to bring in those points of doctrine which are in no way necessary to our salvation, but

which might lead to unprofitable disputations.'

"But there was no small stir among the people. The old men, who were rigid Calvinists, were exceedingly mortified on finding that they had been hearing with satisfaction and extolling a Methodist preacher for twelve months."

It was to the scene of Mr. Smith's labors that young Martin was sent. His preaching in Athens had a great effect, and a sweeping revival began. This lasted through the latter part of the winter into the spring, and the Rev. John Broadhead, as presiding elder of the district, came for the ingathering of the fruits. His report is published in Stevens' Memorials, thus: "Nothing remarkable happened till we came to the little town of Athens. Here I preached on Tuesday to a large congregation in the open air; they heard me with great attention. There had been no society formed by Brother Ruter; it was proposed for me to preach again the next day, read the rules, and form a class. We had a most melting time; the power of the Lord was present to heal, and eighty-three came forward and joined the society. Their eagerness to join alarmed me before they had all united. I was afraid they had not considered sufficiently what

they were doing. I rose up and poured in upon them a very warm exhortation, and told them we wanted none but such as were determined to save their souls, and would evidence it by walking according to the rules of Methodism. As soon as I ended, they came forward again with streaming eyes and desired to join, till we made up the number of eighty-three." This refreshing on the Wethersfield Circuit resulted in its expansion from a two to a four weeks' round. It was indeed a brilliant beginning for our young itinerant in this first brief appointment.

The New York Conference held its annual session June 1, 1801, in the historic old John Street Church. Thither our young preacher journeyed to be admitted on trial in a class of which Elijah Hedding was a member. Ruter was then but sixteen years of age and holds the Methodist record for early acceptance into the ranks of the ministry, barring the exception of George Gary, who was admitted into the New England Conference in 1809 at the age of fifteen years and six months. The Rev. Billy Hibbard, in his Memoirs, speaks of this New York session as follows: "It was a good Conference; much love and good will were manifest in the preachers.

Holiness was still our aim. This doctrine was in our view of the highest importance to the Christian world, and the grand mark of our high calling. Perfect repentance, perfect faith, perfect love were all implied in the grand doctrine of holiness; and everyone seemed to pant after it, as the hart panteth for the cooling water brook. When I went from Conference I was refreshed as with new wine, and as a giant I felt strong to renew the war against the devil and sin."

In 1801 Martin Ruter was stationed on the Chesterfield Circuit, New Hampshire, with Abner Wood; in 1802 on the Landaff Circuit, New Hampshire, with Phinehas Peck, and in 1803 at Adams Circuit, Massachusetts. His ministry met with unbroken success.

Laban Clark relates an experience at Lansingburg, where the notice was given that a youth less than eighteen years of age was to preach. So much attention was attracted that Dr. Blatchford's academy had to be secured for the meeting. "Many went with the expectation of hearing some puerile performance; but, to their surprise, they found themselves listening to an able and eloquent preacher. At the close of the service some of the leading men urged him

to preach again the next evening, which he did in the Presbyterian church, to the profound attention and undiminished delight of a highly respectable audience."

As a youth yet in his teens his influence was potent with those of his own age. Scores of them united with the church and not a few were led into the Christian ministry. The violent opposition that befell many itinerants in New England was not the experience of Ruter. His amiable disposition secured for him the esteem of all who knew him. But the growth of the denomination was made often at the cost of severe persecution. Its ministers were denounced from the pulpits, wronged in the courts, hooted in the streets, and maimed in vicious personal assaults. Yet amid it all the work went steadily forward. The animating spirit was that of the greatest leader of them all, Francis Asbury, the spirit of ceaseless activity. After a fatiguing week of an Annual Conference in New York, he records in his Journal: "So we closed our labors in the city. But instead of a page it would require a volume to tell the restless tossings I have had—the difficulties and anxieties I have felt about preachers and people here and elsewhere,—alternate joy and sorrow. But I have been

supported. I am done; I am gone. New York, once more, farewell!"

Canada appealed to the Methodist pioneer as foreign missionary territory at the opening of the nineteenth century, and volunteers were as eager to invade the North with a message of a free salvation, as in more recent years the French inhabitants of the Saint Lawrence have been urged by economic motives to swarm into the New England regions. Calvin Wooster, Nathan Bangs, and Lorenzo Dow rendered valiant service in Upper Canada about Lake Ontario, but the mixed population of French Catholic, Anglican and Scotch in Lower Canada were not friendly to the system of Wesley. Martin Ruter at the Conference of 1804 received the appointment to Montreal. Not yet having attained his majority, the sojourn in this complex and totally different civilization was destined to affect deeply the purpose and personal attainments of the ambitious young man and shape his future career. The scanty number of communicants for the year was reported as twelve.

In 1805, admitted to deacon's orders by Francis Asbury, Ruter became a member of the New England Conference, since the General Conference of 1804 had separated

the New London and Vermont Districts from the enlarging New York body. Now just passed his twentieth year, he holds in succession the pastorates at Bridgewater Circuit, New Hampshire; Northfield, Portsmouth, and Boston. Dan Young in his Autobiography gives this estimate of these years: "His ministry continued to meet the high expectations his early efforts at sixteen aroused. He was pious, reserved, dignified, learned and eloquent." Of himself Ruter thus modestly speaks: "How wonderful is the providence of God, and how great are his mercies! From the bosom of obscurity, in which I drew my first breath, how wonderfully have I been led, step by step, into the place I am permitted to hold as a member and as a minister in the Church. Nothing of this is due to myself: I have been a most unfaithful and unprofitable servant. By the grace of God I am what I am; and O that my whole life in future may be devoted to his service!"

Within five years in the New England Conference he became the presiding elder of the New Hampshire District, being associated officially with such noted men in Methodism as Joshua Soule, Elijah Hedding, George Pickering, Thomas Branch, and Oliver Deale. The Rev. John Broad-

head had kept the young man under his kindly eye, taking him to the Boston District when serving it as elder. In fact, Ruter was in high favor with all his colleagues. In the session of 1806 he presented the message from Bishop Coke; at that of 1808 he drafted the address to the brethren, requesting their charity for the distressed traveling preachers. Again, at the request of the bishop, he, rather than the secretary, read the appointments of the ministers for the ensuing year of 1809.

The exercises of an Annual Conference were simple and direct; there were none of the numerous anniversary occasions that mark the sitting of a modern ecclesiastical body. There were ordinations to the various ministerial offices and examinations of character. The passing upon each man in the regular connection was a rigorous and thorough proceeding. William Goodhue, who had married a young woman of fifteen without religion, was called to account by his elder. The mind of the Conference about the bridegroom was recorded in three votes: First, his marriage was improperly contracted; second, he was suspended one year from performing the function of a deacon; then—straining the quality of mercy—third, his name was

printed among those admitted to full connection. Great frankness was exercised in the estimate of character and much caution in the admission of candidates to the ministry. The minutes contain such records as these: "Too much disposed to preach about the millennium"; "Zealous, but eccentric"; "Stable amid storms, but rather favoring needless ornaments"; "Married prematurely"; "Of small abilities, but pious." "Joel Winch is useful and well-meaning, but obstinate and contentious." Benjamin Bishop, located, had made improvement and was readmitted.

Usually the business transacted at a Conference was not extensive. After the reports the time would be given to revival efforts. In the session of 1807 the minutes note that "after a conversation on the state of the Lord's work among the people under our charge, the close of the session was given to relating former experiences." The pecuniary rewards of these men were meager indeed. Up to 1800 the allowance to an itinerant was $64 a year and his traveling expenses. Then until the General Conference of 1816 the amount was $80 a year, when it was raised to $100. A like sum in each period was apportioned to the wife or widow, and for each child

under seven years, an allowance of $16, and to each one over seven and under fourteen $24 a year. Nor was this standard invariably met. Billy Hibbard, on a Massachusetts circuit, received $5.84 as his quarterly payment in addition to traveling expenses. He had to keep a family fifty miles distant from his work. Twenty-six services a month were considered light labor by him; his only complaint was made when he had twelve appointments in one week and no chance to get home to see his wife and children. Founded on the fidelity and sacrifice of such servants of God, the Church of Wesley constantly enlarged its usefulness and influence in the East.

An especial distinction came to Martin Ruter in 1808, when he was elected one of the seven delegates from the Annual Conference to the General Conference in Baltimore of the seven territorial groups then in existence. The Eastern group had joined with the New York body in urging a representative quadrennial assembly for Methodism. Such a plan did not go into operation until 1812, but in the spirit of it Ruter was the choice of his brethren at this earlier date. The young man of twenty-three sat on the important Committee of Review and Inspection, as the representative of his sec-

tion, along with Jesse Lee, William McKendree, Thomas Ware, and others. The growing publishing interests of the Church came under its consideration, and Ruter was largely instrumental in having the Conference vote an extra compensation of $1,000 as a fitting recognition of the services of Ezekiel Cooper, the agent of the Book Concern, who had increased its capital eleven fold in nine years—to nearly $50,000. The committee tried to have the rule passed that no pamphlets or hymns should be published independently by a preacher but that they must come through the general Book Concern. This was modified to require only the approbation of the Annual Conference of the publisher.

In 1810 Martin Ruter was returned for his second year as elder. A personal letter after the Conference from Francis Asbury indicates the esteem and confidence of the Bishop:

BALTIMORE, MD., March 11, 1810.

MY DEAR SON:

God be gracious to thee and glorious in the uncoverings of the arm of his power among the people. In all our thinkings and fearings we are comforted in the work of God, that we are assured is not in vain in the Lord. Good news from New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and the Old State. Increase about 7,000 in three Con-

ferences. This will certainly be the greatest year we have ever known in America, west and south. We go before the wind; in the center we are a little on the lee; we are a little becalmed. We are throwing out the oars, calling in ordinary and extraordinary means, fasting, reforming, dressing our vineyards. Surely, you will not faint now when victory is declared on our side. It is my wish that Bishop McKendree and myself after the Conference should go to Boston. Then I take the shore to Newport, New London, and Genesee. The Bishop takes Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, so on to the Genesee Conference. But we have not had time to deliberate or hardly to speak to each other. I have given him the chair of every Conference. It is time in the thirty-nine years of my labors to wind up. I have retired with great pleasure with a valedictory speech, yet I am willing to do all I can to spread abroad the salt of the earth.

F. Asbury.

Portland, Maine, was the scene of pastoral labors for 1811. Then for two years the itinerant took a location, living in North Yarmouth and preaching occasionally there and in its vicinity. In early Methodism it was not infrequent for the ministers to stop temporarily from active work. But Ruter in 1814 was readmitted and officially stationed at North Yarmouth. The Conference of 1815 chose him as its secretary, a position which he filled several times, and where he made a record for

efficiency that was long cherished. The election for the next General Conference at this time was ordered to be by choice rather than by seniority. On the first ballot Ruter received fifty-seven of the sixty-three votes cast, standing second in the delegation of twelve, ahead of both Hedding and Soule. In the year 1815 he was stationed at Salisbury, Massachusetts.

In all this period as an itinerant in New England, the chief concern of Martin Ruter was to win souls. The early devotion to his Master was maintained with consistent fidelity as maturer manhood drew nigh. His power with men was a natural consequence of his close walk with God. The dominant trait of his character was to shun even the appearance of evil. Bishop Hedding could bear the sweeping testimony that in all the years of intimate association he never knew nor heard of his being guilty of a mean action or an imprudent deed. To be employed in the work of the Lord was the holy ambition of his life.

CHAPTER II

THE SELF-TAUGHT SCHOLAR

THE pioneer preachers of Methodism have been designated as men without learned qualifications, but the defense seems ample that they constituted a select chivalry of the modern church for a peculiar age. Although the sect took its rise in the famous University of Oxford in the person of a Fellow of Lincoln College, while Thomas Coke, of Jesus College, Oxford, became the first bishop to America, while the cultured Fletcher of Madeley was named by Voltaire as the most ideal character in Europe, the ministry on this side of the Atlantic was a unique and different class. The itinerant had his training in the school of practical affairs. He became a matriculate in the university of personal relations rather than in that of books and lecture room. He possessed a singular knowledge of human nature, and his broad sympathies made him peculiarly adaptable to many forms of society. The Wesleyan in America displayed shrewd powers of argumentation, kept keenly in touch with

the movements of the time and was given to sturdy self-discipline.

Martin Ruter, in addition to his record as a youthful itinerant and successful evangelist, was reputed to be the best educated man of his day in Methodism. This distinction is the more commendable from the fact that this erudition was the product of his own persistent, private study. As a lad he went over the Vermont hills to learn his letters; later, for a few months, in his fifteenth year, he studied in Bradford. In his autobiography he records: "I had a taste for learning and a thirst for knowledge from my earliest recollections. This taste I cherished by improving diligently such opportunities as I had of private studies at home, and in attending the schools in the neighborhood where I lived. My father being poor was unable to give me either a liberal education or those academic advantages which I earnestly desired to obtain. The deficiencies of my education I endeavored to supply as far as I was able by my own industry; and in these efforts, continued through a course of many years' study, I have not been altogether unsuccessful."

The course of self-instruction now mapped out by him Ruter had to pursue

in the midst of a busy itinerant's career. Many of his studies were mastered on horseback or by the light of the cabin fire. The difficulties were vast, the circuits large, and the stations hard. The Bridgewater Circuit, supplied by him in 1805, required one hundred miles' travel each week, preaching twice a day and regular appointments at thirteen towns. Under such disadvantageous circumstances did he follow that extensive course of reading and study which was never abandoned even amid the laborious service of maturer years. He was uniformly an early riser and thus commanded the refreshing hours of the morning for study and meditation. But though an early riser, he retired late, often accomplishing after supper and before he retired to rest what with many others would have been the work of a day. Besides this self-denial in the matter of sleep he was also very systematic in the distribution of his time. His well-known rule was never to be unemployed, never to be triflingly employed, neither spend more time at one place than is strictly necessary.

Martin Ruter's philosophy of intellectual attainment was aptly expressed in his first baccalaureate address at Allegheny College: "No one was ever born a scholar; nor is it

possible to become one without mental discipline. By the aid of it, some of the most discouraging obstacles have been overcome. Those who have astonished mankind by their great powers have accomplished their work not so much by a superiority of natural talents as by their patient attention and persevering industry. It is necessary that in addition to being persevering in one's studies there be pursued a habit of regular thinking, a certain discipline of thought, and an ability to concentrate on the subjects under investigation."

The range of the studies of Ruter was broad. Probably he was most highly accomplished as a linguist. He was versed also in both pure and mixed mathematics. He was able to teach algebra and geometry; in science astronomy was his familiar study and was taught by him in college. Our scholar applied himself with great diligence to the common branches, such as reading, writing, grammar, and geography. He felt keenly the importance of their accurate and practical use because of his ministry to so many who were ignorant and lowly. He cultivated the English language with much care. Early in life he had acquired a style of pure, classical English; his conversation was correct and chaste, free from bombast

or barbarism. One of his publications was a Collection of Miscellaneous Pieces, made up of selections from the best English authors chosen with a view to intellectual and moral improvement.

The residence of Martin Ruter in Canada at the time of the first flush of his ambition for learning gave him two exceptional opportunities. He became the pupil of a learned rabbi in Montreal and laid the foundation of his lifelong interest in Hebrew. When stationed in Philadelphia, in 1817, he continued his studies in Hebrew with Dr. Charles Wilson, the leading Presbyterian pastor of the city. Ruter had a genuine passion for the tongue of the chosen people, feeling that by its venerable authority it stood at the head of all other languages. Our scholar possessed a peculiar sense of obligation to his church and his age in the use of his attainments. It was his regret that the Hebrew language, so important to the Christian minister, and so sacred by divine authority, should have been so little studied.

Accordingly, he prepared a Hebrew Grammar in 1826 at Cincinnati, designating it as an easy entrance to the language, compiled for the use and encouragement of learners, and adapted to such as have not

the aid of a teacher. He knew that many had been discouraged from the study because of the perplexities arising from the vowel points in the Hebrew words. Besides the greater ease with which the language could be learned without the points, that designated the vowels, Ruter argued that no one need have any compunction to employ this method, as the points were not found in the original sacred text, but had been added by the class of teachers, the Mazoretes, without divine authority and served only as a kind of gloss or comment upon the simple version. In his system anyone who understood English grammar, even if he did not know Greek or Latin, could readily become acquainted with the Hebrew. Under the inspiration of Ruter's leadership, many a minister gave himself to conscientious study. It came to be accepted, that if the original Greek were necessary to give the finest, truest expression of the New Testament, then only by the mastery of the Hebrew could the preacher adequately interpret the riches of the Old Testament.

For one who was ambitious to explore Oriental literature Hebrew was pointed out as the key to the Chaldee, Syriac, and other Eastern tongues. And so it proved

in the case of this self-taught scholar, for he knew his Chaldee and Syriac so thoroughly, as well as having a partial acquaintance with other Shemitic branches, that as early as 1821, one year after opening the Western office of the Methodist Book Concern, he was offered a professorship of Oriental literature in the Cincinnati College.

Ruter, while at Montreal, also utilized the favorable environment to begin the study of French, and he speedily learned to speak the language. He is said to have acquired an excellent accent, and became a fluent conversationalist. He maintained his reading of French literature through his lifetime, and while president of Augusta College he published a small treatise entitled, A Conjugation of French Regular Verbs, for classes in Augusta College, which he used in his teaching. His plan of education included also a careful study of Greek and Latin. He taught these subjects under certain exigencies of his various college appointments and examined students as to their attainments in the classics.

Naturally, the number and variety of the fields of knowledge into which he entered precluded him from a profound and critical scholarship. The utility of the particular subject and its adaptability for the present

circumstance were the impelling motives to his enlarging knowledge. His life was too busy, his change of scene too frequent, and his desire for immediate results too keen for Ruter to become a specialist in literature or in theology.

An academic recognition of the scholarship of Martin Ruter came in the honorary degrees conferred upon him. In 1818 Asbury College, at Baltimore, an institution which for a single year tried to revive the lost Cokesbury, granted the Master of Arts degree to him. Soon after removing to the West, in 1822, Transylvania University of Lexington, Kentucky, bestowed on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. This is believed to have been the first instance of such an honorary title accorded to a Methodist preacher. It speaks significantly of the high repute in which the man was held in his new home in the Ohio Valley. However, many of the brethren of his denomination were disposed to look askance at such an artificial distinction, possibly associating it with the wearing of jewels and costly raiment. Finally, in the General Conference of 1832, a number of memorials on the subject of preachers accepting the title of Doctor of Divinity was submitted by the Philadelphia Conference.

The petitions favored a rule to prevent any of the ministry from receiving a doctorate from a literary institution. The number of Doctors of Divinity at that date in the church was very small. But the petition and the debate following the motion developed much difference of opinion. Some wanted a rule, if any at all were passed, to make every preacher who passed elders' orders a D.D., thus practically indorsing him as capable of teaching divinity, which the title on the face of it would seem to imply. At length the Rev. J. B. Finley said "he believed it to be a foolish waste of time to debate such a question; the colleges would do as they pleased and would honor such ministers as they thought worthy of it, and the ministers would do as they pleased about accepting the honors. Whether the colleges recognized our ability to teach divinity or not, the world knew it. We have been doctoring the divinity of this country for half a century or more and have got it in a convalescent state, and if the people would let us alone we should cure it entirely."

Finally, Dr. Martin Ruter as offering expert testimony in the case, got the floor and described how his title had come to him unsought. He was not aware that it

had made him any wiser or better, nor had it done him any harm. He did not know that he preached any better or any worse, nor did it confer on him any special gifts or talents. The degree had its influence with a certain class of the community and gave him an access that he could not otherwise have had. It served to shut the mouths of those who treated the Methodists, as a body, with contempt because they had no such honors. He felt it was a matter of taste with the colleges, the preachers, and the people, and no rule could be made to control it. Dr. Ruter moved the indefinite postponement of the whole subject, which was carried by a large majority.

Martin Ruter entertained no conceit over his learning. There was nothing of the pedant about him, but in his distinctively intellectual relations there was the same modesty, graciousness, and sincerity that marked his social and religious conversation and walk. Alfred Brunson, in his A Western Pioneer, relates this pertinent instance: "In our preachers' meetings at Dr. Ruter's, in Pittsburgh, when discussing a matter in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, I said that it occurred in a certain year. 'No,' said the Doctor, 'it was at such a time.' I was very certain that I was correct; but

he gave a significant nod of the head, as much as to say, 'I am a D.D., and have been president of a college, and wrote the history of the event in question, and I know.' This ended the contest for the time. But at home I examined his Church History, and found it as I had said. At my next visit to his house I asked him if he had looked up the date. 'No,' he said, 'I am satisfied that I am right.' At this, I stepped up to his bookcase, and taking out his own edition of Gregory, I asked if he would admit that to be good authority. 'Yes, if you find it there, I will give it up.' I then opened at the page and showed it to him. 'Well,' said he, 'this is not the first time I have been mistaken.' There was so much humor and good sense in his reply that it took all the feathers out of my cap for the victory I had obtained."

In the time that Martin Ruter was located at North Yarmouth, Maine, he came into controversy with the Rev. Francis Brown, who was serving the Congregational church there. This pastor was a graduate of Dartmouth, much interested in education, and had a place of influence in Maine. He was called to be the president of his Alma Mater and held the office when the famous Dartmouth College Case was

argued in the supreme court by Daniel Webster. Ruter had published a pamphlet on the Life and Doctrine of the celebrated John Calvin. Brown took exceptions to this in a book entitled Calvin and Calvinism. Ruter rejoined in a letter and Brown came back in a reply. This was the height of the Hopkinsian movement in New England, and our self-taught scholar was looked upon by the Methodists as the one champion equipped to answer a college-bred man in a theological debate. As in such instances, the friends of each contestant claimed the victory for his denomination.

CHAPTER III

THE EDUCATIONAL PIONEER

ENGROSSED in a mighty evangelism, during its initial decades in America, it is not strange that the charge was uttered by many critics and rivals, that the Methodists were hostile to the interests of education. A singular fatality had pursued the early efforts to conduct schools. The total loss by fire of Cokesbury College at Abingdon, Maryland, in 1795, after ten thousand pounds had been expended in ten years, led Bishop Asbury to record in his Journal his belief, that the Lord had not called them to build colleges. Yet schools were projected in the districts, or embryonic Conferences, after the plan of the famed Kingswood School of John Wesley in England. Bethel Academy in Kentucky, in 1791, and Uniontown Academy in Pennsylvania, in 1792, came into existence for a few years, but the general scheme failed. The special training of the clergy received practically no attention until the General Conference of 1816 voted to prepare the first course of study for the traveling ministers.

It is as an educator that Dr. Ruter commands paramount attention. The principal of Newmarket Academy, the first president of Augusta College, Kentucky, the president of Allegheny College from 1833-37, and the projector of Rutersville College in Texas complete the record of his executive activities. The Academy at South Newmarket, New Hampshire, was the project of the New England Conference. The Rev. John Broadhead was the originator of the plan. His forceful leadership of the Methodist evangelism of the East has already been frequently cited in these pages. In other fields he showed the same intrepid mastery. He served four years in Congress; he refused the nomination for governor of New Hampshire. He championed in the State Legislature the measure which allowed the Methodists the right to be a distinct religious sect and have privileges. Later a bill was proposed that would repeal the law that a New Hampshire town could vote to settle a minister and then pay his salary out of the common taxes. Only three votes in the lower house favored the repeal, but the campaign continued until by 1819 it passed both houses. A citizen could leave a certificate with the clerk of the town that he was a member of another

denomination and thus be freed from taxes to support a Congregational minister. But some of the ancient worthies felt that such action signified a repeal of the Christian religion, so deeply was the idea of exclusive privilege embedded in the ecclesiastical thinking.

There were only eight thousand Methodists in New England in 1815, and few of these in the interior. Yet they did not want to send their children to institutions of the "standing order." Whereupon, in the house of Broadhead, in South Newmarket, the initial meeting was held and a canvass begun. The town was willing to aid and give the land if the preachers would guarantee instruction to be furnished five years. In the Bristol session of the Conference, in June, 1816, the proposition made a sensation; it seemed hasty and too big to handle. But the leaders of the Church favored it. The popular Joshua Soule was a predominant force for it. Martin Ruter, acknowledged then as the foremost scholar and the most eloquent preacher of the body, was a pronounced supporter. By the first committee, consisting of Martin Ruter, John Broadhead, and Caleb Dustin, a report favorable to the undertaking was submitted, and a second committee presented

ways and means. Ruter, who was then serving as secretary of the Conference, exercised a guiding hand. The vote was strongly in the affirmative, and then the ministers proceeded to subscribe $260 of the $755 needed for the erection of a building. Ruter headed the list with a gift of $80, Broadhead added $55, Pickering $35, and the others smaller sums. The town of South Newmarket aided in labor and material.

By the annual session of 1817 a two-story wooden structure, thirty-two by twenty-four feet, had been completed—a building yet standing. The Conference now faced anew the magnitude of its task. After a serious and long debate it was voted to employ a teacher at $500 and guarantee the salary. Moses White, of the University of Vermont, who held a Bachelor of Arts degree, one of the few Methodist graduates of the times, was chosen instructor. On September 1 the academy was opened with ten students, five of each sex—an early experiment in coeducation. The enrollment of the year reached twenty-seven. At the Conference of 1818 it was voted to incorporate the school. This same body elected the trustees, approved the rules, and controlled the funds.

But the momentous legislation of this session of the New England clergy was the election of Martin Ruter as the first principal. The declared design was to strengthen the institution, and the new executive was at once in himself a flaming advertisement. The attendance rose the first day to eighty, and his advent marked indeed a new era. A man so widely known as Ruter drew attention to the school and enlisted in its support those who had been hitherto indifferent. In the academy it awakened fresh enthusiasm and large expectations, especially among those studying for the ministry. The example of a self-made man advancing to the front rank of pulpit orators and assuming the headship of his Church's educational interests, suggested large possibilities to those favored with better earlier advantages.

Large plans were entertained, a library founded; $1,000 was given by Colonel Amos Binney, president of the Board of Trustees and collector of the Port of Boston; a house was contributed by John Mudge, of Lynn. Many students made religious profession, and for a time matters looked very hopeful. Since the studies of Principal Ruter in his self-education had been very broad, he came into control with

large ideas for the academy. The course of study was extensive and full. In addition to Latin, Greek, French, mathematics, and rhetoric, courses were offered in logic, philosophy, ecclesiastical history, divinity, Hebrew, Chaldee, and Syriac. He desired the early advancement of the institution into a college on the model of Cokesbury, and started a branch academy at Kingston.

But, however potent a factor Martin Ruter proved in upbuilding the Newmarket plant, he was a costly piece of ornamentation. If the number of students grew, the expenditures increased even more rapidly. Tuition receipts alone do not sustain. In 1819, at the close of his first year, the deficit was $356.95. An agent was sent abroad who secured $1,603. This tided the trustees through another year, but it was not enough to insure the continuance on this larger scale. At the General Conference of 1820 the Church at large called Martin Ruter to open the Western branch of the Book Concern.

Upon his resignation at Newmarket, Moses White again took charge and remained until the academy closed in 1823. The financial support had dwindled; the site of the school had been badly chosen, the big academy at Exeter being only four

miles away. Besides, there were few Methodists in this region on the seaboard. A new location was sought, and the New England Conference once more backed its educational aims, when Wilbraham, Massachusetts, became the seat of the Academy, which later was to pass on the succession to Wesleyan University at Middletown. In its brief existence, South Newmarket did great good, over four hundred students receiving their training and inspiration in its halls. It supplied the first contingent of "educated men in Methodism who went forth as apostles in the new dispensation of popular education."

The Methodist quadrennial gathering of 1820 bore witness to the influence of the experiment at Newmarket, for a recommendation was made that the Annual Conferences begin similar foundations. The Ohio and Kentucky Conferences, formed in 1820 from the Western Conference. promptly took the matter under advisement and began to look for a site. Martin Ruter, then living in Cincinnati, was put on the committee with John Collins at the Ohio session of September 21, 1821, to confer with the Kentucky representatives. The eligible place was Augusta, Bracken County, on the Ohio River, forty-five miles north

of Cincinnati, where the Bracken Academy had been incorporated by the Kentucky Legislature in 1798 with a gift of six thousand acres of land. The property had been prudently managed and largely converted, so that the trustees of the Academy held a fund of $10,000 now available, although the school was practically a failure. A leading spirit of the local body was a Methodist, Captain James Armstrong.

The commissioners met in Augusta, December 15, 1821, and came to satisfactory terms for an institution of greatly enlarged educational outlook. Then the Bracken Academy trustees, together with Martin Ruter and his three associates of Ohio and Kentucky, applied to the Legislature for a charter, and on December 7, 1822, Kentucky authorized Augusta College. The statute of the State provided that the college should be founded and maintained forever upon the most liberal plan for the benefit of the youth of every class of citizens and every religious denomination, who should be freely admitted to equal privileges and advantages of education under the direction of twenty-three trustees.

The action of the General Assembly was based upon the following considerations:

WHEREAS, The Methodist Episcopal Church in the States of Kentucky and Ohio have determined on establishing an extensive seminary of learning in the Western country, to the support of which they are pledged to use their utmost and undivided efforts, and from which no student is to be excluded in consequence of his religious opinions or the religious opinions of his parents, relations, or guardians; and that the same seminary of learning shall be conducted upon free, liberal and enlightened principles; and,

WHEREAS, The establishment of an institution of this kind within the State of Kentucky, if conducted on principles such as are here laid down, will be of great advantage to the citizens of said State, by disseminating knowledge and useful literature and by introducing into our State students from Ohio and other States, thereby increasing our pecuniary advantages and intercourse with our sister States.

Bracken Academy named three of the trustees and turned over the proceeds of the $10,000 on the condition that it support instruction in Latin, Greek, and English branches. Captain Armstrong and the local friends, assisted by the Rev. Jonathan Stamper as agent of the Kentucky Conference, assumed the erection of a college building. This excellent structure of brick, forty-two by eighty-two feet, three stories in height, was completed by October of the next year. John P. Finley, a brother of

James P. Finley of the Ohio Conference, conducted an academic department for two years, when he died. Also the large benefactor, Captain Armstrong, passed away at this period of the infancy of the institution.

In 1825 John P. Durbin, later to be the editor of the New York Advocate and president of Dickinson College, was elected professor of ancient languages. When a young preacher in the Ohio Conference in 1821 Durbin had been encouraged by Martin Ruter to commence the study of the Latin grammar and language, later finishing his course at Miami University. The duties of Durbin in the earlier years at Augusta consisted largely in soliciting funds. Also, in 1825, to the chair of mathematics and natural philosophy was appointed a new graduate, a Bachelor of Arts from Transylvania University, John P. Tomlinson, who was to serve Augusta College nearly a quarter of a century, being its president from 1836 until 1849. The institution was yet without a head, but gradually and surely it was being equipped to give thorough collegiate instruction.

There had been some doubt as to the extent of the powers granted in the charter of 1822, so that a supplementary act was passed by the Legislature on January 12,

1827. It decreed that the trustees of Augusta College, together with the president and a majority of the professors, should have the power to confer the degrees of Bachelor or Master of Arts upon students completing prescribed courses, and also any honorary degrees to others, on account of special merit, in as full and ample a manner as in any similar institution.

Besides, there was added at this time to the Act of Incorporation the following unique source of financial support and absolute monopoly of transportation: John Schoolfield, who for twenty years had operated a ferry over the Ohio, sold his right to the trustees. Augusta College, accordingly, secured the exclusive privilege in perpetuity to operate the ferry across the river from the south for a mile and a half above and below the town, giving bond of $1,000 for faithful service. The net proceeds accruing from a table of fares prescribed by the Act, "of twelve and one half cents for every man, woman, child, horse, mule, jack, or jenny," was to be applied to the support of the professors in the literary departments.

Matters were now in readiness for the choice of an executive of the college, and

all the signs pointed to one man as qualified for the first presidency of Augusta. That man was Martin Ruter, D.D., now ending his second quadrennium as the Western agent of the Book Concern. His personal inclination was to go into the active ministry at the close of his term in 1828, but at the earnest solicitations of Bishops Hedding and George he accepted an election in 1827. He did not actively enter upon his duties, however, until the General Conference of 1828 elected his successor. His title was President and Professor of Oriental Languages and Belle Lettres. F. A. Davis, M.D., became professor of chemistry and botany, and the faculty was now complete.

Augusta had been rounded into a strong institution, capable of doing high-grade work, with courses of instruction equal to those of any college in the land. It was the only chartered Methodist school of higher learning in the world. Its first class was graduated in August, 1829, Nicholas B. T. Marshall, Henry Rucker, Alexander A. Spencer, and Pascal F. Wright. One hundred years after Charles Wesley had started the Holy Club at the University of Oxford, this group of four in America went forth as the leaders of the great procession, ever enlarging, of Methodist graduates.

In his autobiography Dr. Ruter records: "The only objection to accepting the appointment to Augusta College was that it would call my attention in some degree from the more immediate labors of the ministry, and might lessen my own progress in Christian experience. But I had seen, when in charge of the Newmarket Academy, and long before I went there, that the Church needed seminaries of learning and could not conduct its important interests without them. I saw that these seminaries, unless carefully managed, would not accomplish the purpose intended. I therefore accepted the appointment, determining to spend a few years, not many, in seeing what might be accomplished in this way for the prosperity of our Zion." His hopes for the College were high, and he labored ably to advance all its varied interests.

In a letter to Zion's Herald of July 13, 1827, he declared there was no doubt of Augusta's ultimate success, but there was immediate, urgent need for a library and for philosophical and chemical apparatus. Professor Durbin made visits to New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore in behalf of the institution. The report made of his tour in 1829 showed $1,500 had been collected, of which a portion was used for

equipment, but more than half of the amount went to his salary and expenses. There were valuable gifts also of books and a mineral cabinet. The number of students in Ruter's first year was eighty-two. There came no less than thirty from Louisiana and Mississippi, traveling one thousand miles to reach the village. In 1829 the attendance rose to one hundred and thirty in the two departments, one hundred of college rank. The teaching staff consisted of seven professors and instructors. Dr. Ruter organized an educational society at the college site, which accumulated a fund for the aid of worthy students.

The evangelistic note was dominant in the school from the beginning. In Zion's Herald of March 5, 1828, the President spoke of the religious prospects as very animated, inasmuch as sixty persons had united with the church. All commented on the soundness of the conversions of the young people. The policy of Augusta was thus expressed by Professor Durbin: "We believe that this college should be made the nursery not only of learning, but also of morals and religion. We rejoice that in this one regular college in the West the youth can be educated and their principles not corrupted. Yet we do not teach them

religion otherwise than as we teach other subjects, endeavoring to walk uprightly before them, clearly convinced that our youth shall not be taught by any man, unless he is decidedly pious." This zeal of the authorities at Augusta is deeply significant in the light of the contemporary report in The Quarterly Register of the American Educational Society, that only one third of the students in New England colleges were professing Christians, while the proportion in other sections scarcely reached a fifth.

The Board of Trustees had the power to fill vacancies in their number, and the influence of Dr. Ruter was used to select influential men of affairs. John McLean, justice of the Supreme Court, became a trustee and had the address in 1831 before the Union and the Jefferson Literary Societies of the college. The success of Augusta was such that the Legislature spoke of it officially as one of the most prosperous institutions of the commonwealth. The standards of scholarship were well maintained, though within a few years something of a novelty was introduced—a sort of early elective system. This provided that without taking a regular course students might study what they or their

parents desired and nothing more. "They need not embarrass themselves with studies in which they are not interested and which are unconnected with their destination in life."

In 1831 John P. Durbin was called to his Eastern field and the Rev. H. B. Bascom, one time chaplain of Congress and president of Madison College, the institution of the Pittsburgh Conference, from 1827 until 1829, entered the faculty. John A. Roche, the biographer of Durbin, speaking of these two men, together with Dr. Ruter and Professor Tomlinson, comments: "Who that reads these names and knew these ministers can fail to wonder at the early power of Methodism to raise up men for its necessities? It was a marvelous combination of mental and moral forces. It showed astonishing ability of adaptation to the Church's demands. It is difficult to think of these four men in one college, and that our first."

Notwithstanding all the planning, the prayer, and the high purpose for Augusta College, there were dark days ahead. The citizens of Bracken County worked vigorously in 1830 to have the Legislature revoke the $10,000 fund of Bracken Academy and distribute it to the common

schools, but the State kept faith with the college trustees. The tuition rates were low—fifteen dollars a year for the college and twelve for the academy. Even with the increased attendance the receipts did not pay the salaries of the professors, whose financial rewards were at best very small. Dr. Ruter felt keenly that an imperative obligation rested upon the Methodist Conferences. They had been allowed a liberal charter and the institution was entirely under their management. It was legally and morally binding upon them to adequately endow Augusta College.

Yet it must be confessed that the Methodists generally were tardy in rallying solidly to the financial support of their educational enterprises. Whether it was the survival of that early, wide-spread disinclination to emphasize the importance of literary attainments, or because the great majority of the communicants were persons of small means, the fact remains that not a few men gave their best talent and devotion to the schools of Methodism and received for many years a beggarly recompense. Nor were the institutions equipped in a manner suitable to the high service they were called to render.

The Ohio and Kentucky Conferences

attempted nothing large and permanent for the support of Augusta before 1833. Then the body south of the Ohio raised quickly $10,000 to found the Roberts Professorship, and the body north of the Ohio gave a similar sum for the McKendree Professorship. Before this time the current expenses had been met by various temporary expedients in money-raising. The students continued to come in encouraging numbers. In 1832 the senior class contained sixteen members, and the internal spirit of the school was excellent.

Once again Dr. Ruter went as a delegate to General Conference, the session of May, 1832, meeting in Philadelphia. Here the one constant impelling motive of his life reasserted itself. As he puts it: "I felt an earnest desire to be given up exclusively to the work of the ministry. No honors, no emoluments seemed of value, compared with the great duties of preaching the gospel of Christ and being actively engaged in pointing sinners to him. My purposed resignation as president of the college was influenced by these views and some objects connected with the welfare of my family, but the leading reason was to devote my time wholly to the duties of the ministry." Returning to his Conference in Kentucky,

he resigned as college executive. He took occasion to say at various times that he had the strongest confidence in the prosperity of Augusta and no lack of faith in its ultimate success had induced him to leave.

But the financial burden of the school had rested heavily upon the retiring president. He had gone to Augusta out of a deep sense of duty and expected to remain a limited period. His very departure acted to spur his brethren to bring to pass the definite endowment that had hitherto been unprovided. A generous estimate was accorded in Kentucky to the work of Dr. Ruter, as witnessed in the public prints: "He has served Augusta College with ability and industry in every way equal to the expectations of his friends and the public. No man ever labored more indefatigably for the good of any similar enterprise. His zealous efforts in public and in private have contributed largely to the present promise and prosperity of the institution."

The supreme testimony to the executive worth of Dr. Ruter came after Augusta had obtained its permanent endowment and possessed a plant valued at nearly $50,000, when he was invited in 1836 to return and resume the presidency. The college suf-

fered in later years through the differences of the two supporting Conferences, the discussion of the slavery question, and the rivalry with Transylvania University. Finally the State revoked its charter and forfeited a portion of its resources. But its influence through such sons as Judge Thomas A. Marshall, Hon. W. C. Groesbeck, and Bishop R. S. Foster, and a host of others, has been the rich heritage of the Ohio River region and the entire nation.

The whole range of education found an ardent advocate in Dr. Ruter, nor were his interests confined to the particular institutions that he served. In the General Conference of 1824, he was the chairman of the Committee on Education. In addition to the action urging that each Annual Conference use its utmost exertion to establish a seminary of learning, the recommendation of his report was approved, that every traveling preacher be enjoined to urge that suitable teachers be employed in the instruction of the youth of the country and to use his influence to introduce teachers into the schools whose learning and piety were commendable. While at Cincinnati, feeling the need of suitable books for primary instruction, Dr. Ruter prepared an arithmetic, a primer, and a spelling book. He was much

concerned that the learning of children in the rudiments be accurate and thorough. He was particularly anxious to inculcate habits of correct pronunciation. His primary texts had a large sale in the schools of the day.

As a clergyman, naturally, he placed very great stress upon religious education, and, in harmony with the policy of the Methodist Church, he became a warm supporter of the Sabbath school movement. Bishop Asbury had established the first Sabbath school of America in 1786 in Hanover County, Virginia. The official recognition of the importance of the work followed in the Conferences. But not until 1824 did a thorough program of action evolve. Then the duty was laid on each pastor to encourage religious instruction, a catechism was to be compiled, and the book agents were to prepare literature suitable for the young. Martin Ruter, by his leadership in his Western city, brought the Christian denominations into an extensive campaign for the ingathering of the children. In 1825, on the occasion of the great demonstration at Lafayette's visit, he delivered an address to a thousand of Sabbath school scholars.

In the General Conference of 1832 Dr.

Ruter again had a place on the Committee of Education, while in the gathering of 1836 his chairmanship of the committee allowed him to formulate an educational confession of faith. His program of education was fourfold—domestic, moral, religious, and literary. The home, the church, the public school, and the college were to be the agencies for its promotion. He averred that no religious society had done so much in the circulation of books or the extension of human knowledge as the Methodists. When they should have made a similar record in the schools in the matter of education in all branches, then the denomination would hold a position of far-reaching power.

CHAPTER IV

EDITOR AND AUTHOR

AMERICAN Methodism early utilized the agency of the press in its evangelistic work and in the promotion of Christian growth. No other denomination has made so brilliant a record as it in the dissemination of religious literature. Its exemplar and commander was naturally John Wesley. He planned the Arminian Magazine, whose first number issued at the beginning of 1778 in London. On this side of the Atlantic the General Conference of 1796 ordered the publishing of a Methodist Magazine, to be modeled after Wesley's periodical. The publication appeared for two years, 1797-98, and then lapsed, largely because John Dickins, who had been the editor at Philadelphia, fell a victim to yellow fever.

The next periodical of Methodism was attempted by the New England Conference alone, which began in 1815 the issuance of the New England Missionary Magazine at Concord, New Hampshire. The editor was Martin Ruter. The purpose was expressed in the preface, thus: "The use of maga-

THE

NEW ENGLAND

MISSIONARY MAGAZINE,

FOR

Promoting Useful Knowledge

AND

EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE.

"And ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free." JOHN viii. 32.

CONCORD:

PRINTED BY ISAAC HILL

1815

zines for the purpose of diffusing divine knowledge and increasing the influence of the gospel is the most ready way for communicating accounts of revivals of religion and of God's providential dealings toward his creatures. The publishers of this magazine, having for their object a more general spread of evangelical doctrine and wishing to make the work as useful as possible, have judged it expedient to issue it in small numbers so as to render it particularly advantageous to those who have but little time for reading."

It was a modest little publication, duodecimo in size, containing thirty-six pages, which appeared every two months. Only four in all were issued. The term "missionary" in the title, it is to be observed, signified itinerant. The contents of each number, as selected by the editor, held to a carefully prescribed range of subjects. The first number started appropriately with a sketch of John Wesley as the first missionary; later, the lives of John Fletcher and Dr. Coke are treated. Extracts were given from the sermons of Dr. Adam Clarke, Dr. Rush, Dr. Paley, and Dr. Benson. Accounts were printed of notable Christian experiences and religious revivals at Malden, Sandwich, and other places.

Each number contained one article of horrors and suffering—stories of the Inquisition, of persecutions, of pestilence and plague—a somber note, betraying the predilection of the editor who was later to republish Foxe's Book of Martyrs. Also, each number closed with selections of poetry from Cowper, Young, and anonymous writers.

Martin Ruter was most keen to resent reflections upon Methodism. He takes to task the hostile authorities who misquote statistics concerning his Church. The magazine has an element of the controversial and defends the Methodist doctrines against the prevalent Hopkinsian attacks of the time. The record of the Church for missionaries, or, rather, itinerants, was cited with much pride. Out of eighteen hundred admitted in forty years over seven hundred were then preaching from Maine to New Orleans. It was said "that the Congregationalists and other denominations have of late begun to imitate the Methodists; once they were loaded with reproaches by the ministers and the people of other churches, because they traveled to preach the gospel; but now their very persecutors are using great exertions to be like them. It is hoped the time is fast approaching

when the watchmen shall see eye to eye and with one accord lift up their voices to proclaim a full salvation."

Though an official church periodical was tardy in being permanently established, the presses of the Book Concern continued to fulfill vigorously the function for which they were first set up in 1789. The secret of the success was the cooperation of all the ministers. Those who had desired to preach under the direction of Wesley in England had been pledged by him to the sale of his books and tracts. His injunction was, "See that every house is supplied with books." All the gains from sales went to the Church. The American itinerants were supplied with the literature essential to their evangelism. In the old-fashioned saddle-bags traveled a choice collection of the works of Wesley, Fletcher, Benson, Clarke, Watson, Bangs, and Lee, together with volumes of history, philosophy, and essays. At the end of the week-day services or in pastoral visits these were exhibited and sold.

The business management of the Book Concern had its vicissitudes. After the large financial increase under Ezekiel Cooper, there were losses from excessive credits and unwise selections of titles to be

issued. Under the list of the General Catalogue, the range was woefully narrow, and more liberal methods of deciding upon what to print had to be devised. When Joshua Soule took charge in New York, in 1816, he brought the business back to its former high efficiency and restored the assets to the previous bounding figures in his four years' service. The expansion of Methodism in the West led to urgent calls for a branch of the Book Concern to be placed beyond the Alleghanies. The differences in the value of currency had become so demoralizing that thousands of dollars received from the Western sales had a greatly depreciated exchange value in New York, and had to be deposited in the Cincinnati banks. The only way to avoid large loss in this medium was to buy some raw product in the Ohio markets and ship it to the East. Moreover, the cost and trouble of transportation were very great. The books were taken by wagon over the mountains to Pittsburgh and thence shipped by the Ohio River. Cincinnati seemed to be the appropriate place for a depository, being a large center of trade and a stronghold of the denomination.

At the General Conference of 1820 Martin Ruter became the chairman of the

Book Committee. It formulated an aggressive policy for the publishing interests of the Church, looking to the purchasing of property in New York city and a better system of accounting by all the ministerial agents. When it was decided to grant the petition for a Western branch, Martin Ruter was easily the favorite candidate for the agency and was elected on the second ballot. The new establishment at once did an excellent business, yet it was a very unpretentious structure in which our scholar was housed. In a single room, at the corner of Fifth and Elm, in a space of fifteen by twenty feet, he opened shop. This sufficed, however, at the start to hold the stock of Disciplines, Hymn Books, Conference Journals, works of Coke, Fletcher, and Wesley and Asbury's Journal. Martin Ruter served in a multiplicity of capacities, as manager, buyer, shopkeeper, salesman, entry clerk, bookkeeper, packer, and shipping clerk. Under these various heads, he doubtless fully earned the salary of $800 a year allotted, in addition to the traveling expenses to the West. The Ohio Conference through a committee of three had supervision of the branch, examining the accounts yearly.

James R. Finley, in his Sketches of

Western Methodism, writes: "An individual passing along Elm Street in 1820 would have seen a small office, over the door of which a small rude sign bore the inscription 'Methodist Book Room.' In that small room great things were done, like as in the log cabins of the fathers. Peering within one would see a plain but intelligent-looking man, behind the counter or bending over books, ready with kind words and an open heart. This man was Martin Ruter, the master spirit later of the Texas pioneers. This room was a sort of preachers' exchange. The books of the General Catalogue could be bought and subscriptions given for the Methodist periodicals."

The receipts of the first year were $4,000; the average for the quadrennium was $6,280.22 annually. In the second term, from June 24, 1824, to July 14, 1828, the average ran to $7,381.66. In the eight years the total receipts of the Western experiment were $54,647.52. But the agent had been put under narrow restrictions. He was not allowed to print either books or papers. However, Martin Ruter was a man of initiative and courage. Because of the urgent demand, at his own risk he reprinted, in 1821, Dr. Bangs's Vindication of

Methodist Episcopacy and Sherlock's Treatise on Divine Providence. He also prepared, upon his own responsibility, a scriptural catechism and a primer. It is a satisfaction to know that these ventures resulted in no personal loss, and the profits of the Concern were enlarged.

During his residence in Cincinnati Dr. Ruter contributed signally to the enlarging influence of his denomination in the city. A second church had been completed the year before his arrival. A third was added in the decade and the pulpit supply increased. Preparations were under way for the noted Wesley Chapel, which was long the cathedral of the Methodism of all that region and the place of the sessions of the General Conference of 1836. Dr. Ruter was in frequent demand as a preacher; he often engaged in revival services and took a chief part in the promotion of the Sunday school work, to which his denomination was so thoroughly committed. He was tendered the position of Professor of Oriental Languages of the Cincinnati College in 1821, but declined the offer. Members of the faculties of Kentucky institutions bear testimony that Martin Ruter was generally looked upon as the leading man of Methodism in Cincinnati and the Ohio region.

It was in 1822 that Transylvania University, then at the height of its success under the presidency of Dr. Horace Holley, of Boston, conferred upon our Western agent the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

This period of the life of Dr. Ruter, that of his forties, is the time of his largest literary activity. Several of his writings were not published and are yet preserved. Works that he had long planned were able to be brought out after he became the president of Augusta College. In 1830 he published The Martyrs, or a History of Persecution, a compilation from the works of Foxe and others. But the book of Dr. Ruter's that has had the widest circulation and the closest attention in Methodist circles was The History of the Christian Church, finished at Augusta, September 15, 1831, and printed in Cincinnati in 1832. This work was based on the famous study of Dr. George Gregory (1754-1808), the English divine, but our college editor revised the original, particularly in the portions after the Reformation, and brought it up to date. The additions included a general view of missions, together with other benevolent institutions, and a discussion of the present state and prospects of the Christian world. A second edition of this

Church History was prepared at Pittsburgh in 1834. In the Conference Course of Study for all candidates this work became a required text, holding its place for half a century, as some of the elderly clergymen of the connection may recall with more or less vividness.

Much of the unpublished writings of Martin Ruter consists of critical remarks upon various portions of the Holy Scriptures. As a close student of the Hebrew he delighted in making his own translations of the Old Testament, and his exegesis of certain passages is decidedly original. The comments on Proverbs, thirtieth chapter, make an elaborate display of his scholarship. The treatment of Second Psalms is much more popular and inspirational.

Among the other unpublished writings of Dr. Ruter, his Letters to a Young Minister are rather characteristic. Letter One has as its theme "General Observations."

My Dear William: As you have engaged in the work of the gospel ministry, I have been led by several considerations to offer you some thoughts in relation to your sacred calling. My regard for your personal happiness is a sufficient inducement to this, but I have a much stronger motive—in the interest which I feel in the cause of religion.

You will expect me to write with the affection of a father, the plainness of a friend, and as an old minister without reserve. The office which you have taken upon you is most sacred in its nature, and it is charged with responsibility the bare thought of which is enough to make us tremble.

You are not sent to negotiate peace between an earthly prince and his enemies, but you are commissioned from heaven, if you be a true minister of Christ, to negotiate peace between God and the world. How weighty and solemn is this thought! Let me then say unto you: be diligent to know yourself as a man, to know yourself as a minister of Christ, to know your Master, the Prince of Peace, to know the world to whom you are sent, and to know the message with which you are charged. But you must not stop here. Knowledge alone is not sufficient. You must have wisdom—the application of your knowledge to the great purposes of your calling. You must be faithful, prudent, persevering, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

In order to acquire that knowledge and wisdom which are necessary to enable you to sustain with propriety, honor, and usefulness the character of a minister of the gospel, it will be proper to spend much of your time in reading and study. Much depends upon a proper selection of useful books.

A mind naturally strong and discriminating, a large stock of general information, deep and extensive erudition, an intimate acquaintance with the principles of elocution, with a pleasing voice and an engaging aspect are requisite to render a preacher universally popular. But you are to

remember that the gospel minister is not sent to gain popularity but to save souls. He is not to preach himself but Christ Jesus crucified. This truth should be indelibly impressed upon your heart; and it should influence the whole of your soul and all your public exercises.

Gifts should not be despised; neither should they be misused. They are not bestowed for personal aggrandizement. They confer special obligations and should inspire sensations of a corresponding nature. Gratitude, humility, diligence, and a cautious regard to accountability should mark and distinguish those ministers who have received superior qualifications for the sacred office which they fill.

You will not forget, my dear William, that genius frequently throws a splendid glare about itself and fascinates the multitude without possessing substantial qualities. It may excite the admiration of thousands and yet not fix the attention of one individual on the great object of the gospel mission; while a minister, who has but limited powers of mind but is at the same time deeply religious, truly devoted to his calling, and fired with zeal for the Redeemer's glory, will not fail to be useful in the Church of Christ. The first will preach with the fascinating charms of eloquence; the latter will preach in the demonstration of the Spirit and the power of God.

It is of the very first importance to you to possess correct ideas concerning human obligation, for the greater part of theological errors have originated from confounding the several systems of law, which God has given unto man. The depravity of human nature is a primary

principle in revealed religion. The necessity of the supernatural aid of the Holy Spirit is predicated on our moral corruption. This divine aid is communicated to us only through the medium of the atonement of the glorious Redeemer. The doctrine of the atonement implies an extraordinary character; a character originally above law yet capable of suffering. Such a character we find in the eternal Logos—God made flesh. Thus you are led to the character of your glorious Master, who has charged you with the important mission of his grace to a sinful world.

But this character has been called into question; his divinity has been denied. Our love to God, our love to the Church, our consolation in time and our hope in eternity—all these come into collision with this denial. Into this subject I shall particularly enter in several of my subsequent letters to you. In the meanwhile I wish you to weigh, with serious attention, the general observations which I have made in this letter.

Letter Five was written on the topic, "Mystery Affords No Grounds for Objections against the Divinity of Christ."

My Dear William: You will not think it strange that men are fond of urging objections against the divinity of Christ on the ground of its being mysterious. They seem always ready to say: "How can we admit that Jesus who was born of Mary is the everlasting Jehovah? This subject is too mysterious for our compresion; and until its incomprehensibility shall be removed, we have good reasons to reject it."

You will readily observe, my dear William,

that this is broad ground to assume, and as untenable as it is broad. What! are we to reject everything, which we cannot comprehend? This would be a sweeping stroke indeed—the very besom of destruction to the knowledge of man. For what science, what truth, within the whole circle of our knowledge, is in all respects within the comprehension of the human mind?

Let me address these mighty sons of reason. Point out one single object which you perfectly understand. Is it spirit? But how little do you know of spirit! You may partially understand some of its qualities. But what do you know respecting the essence of spirit, the mode of its existence, or the possibilities of its nature? Can you enter into the deep recesses of the spiritual world? Can you ascertain the extremes of created, immaterial existence? Where are the bounds which circumscribe the lowest and highest degree of this existence? What are the utmost possible energies of created intelligence? What are the extreme bounds of intuitive perception or of rational deduction within the power of such intelligence? You know nothing about these things.

But do you perfectly comprehend the material world? You may understand something respecting some of its properties. But what is the essence of matter? What are all its actual combinations, or what the limits which bound its possible modifications? Can you satisfactorily answer one half of the questions which may be asked concerning one hair of your head? Mystery surrounds you on every side. You behold it in every place, in every object you contemplate it. The meanest reptile that crawls, or the

smallest particle of matter, is an object in some respects incomprehensible to you.

And will you, then, deny the divinity of Christ, because you cannot fathom the depths of this doctrine? You are always to remember, my dear friend, that all objects present themselves in two points of view to our consideration. One of these regards their essence, the possibilities of their nature, their modes of existence. Here everything is involved in mysterious darkness. In the other point of view objects present themselves to our consideration in regard to the reality of their existence. Here with respect to many objects, we are surrounded with light. Truth rises before us, distinctly manifested to our perception by the light of evidence. While we tread this ground, while we confine our inquiries to the reality of things and the certainty of facts, we keep within the limits prescribed to human intellect by the God of nature. And here, with the proper management, of attention and labor, truth becomes, if not an easy, yet, generally, a sure acquisition. But the moment we pass these bounds we involve ourselves in darkness. Impelled by idle curiosity to seek after the essence of things, the secret principles which connect causes with their effects and other objects of equal abstruseness, we lose ourselves, and wander in a labyrinth of errors.

In our search after truth it would be the most unreasonable thing to make the mystery which might be involved in a doctrine, the ground of its condemnation. The rejection of any proposition should be founded on the want of evidence to support its truth, and not on the incomprehensibility of the things to which it may relate. Our

inquiry respecting any doctrine recommended to our acceptance should not be, "Is it mysterious?" but it should be, "Is it supported by sufficient evidence?" For nature is full of incomprehensibility; every truth has its mysteries.

Therefore to reject the doctrine of the divinity of Christ because it is mysterious is very unreasonable; and it may be attended with consequences the most ruinous, for the ground on which it is predicated is sufficiently broad to support universal skepticism.

You will not expect, my dear William, that these boasted sons of reason, when they have been dislodged from a stronghold which they have taken under the covert of mystery, will immediately submit to the arms of truth. You will expect them to retreat until they lodge themselves in some other deep recess in the mountains of incomprehensibility. From thence you may expect them to make up on you the following charge: "But it is so exceedingly strange that the God of glory should unite himself with human nature in the person of Jesus Christ that we know not how to admit it. It is utterly inconceivable to us."

Here the objection is predicated on the same ground as that just before considered—on the inconceivable nature of the subject. No man who seriously considers this doctrine will deny that the union of the divine nature with humanity in the person of Jesus Christ is exceedingly strange, and in some respects utterly inconceivable to mortals. But are we to refuse to receive everything which is strange or inconceivable? In relation to this question the objector may be referred to the constitution of his own nature,

in which the union of spirit and matter is absolutely necessary to his present existence. In this union he will find so much that is strange and mysterious that he will have to lay these considerations out of the argument, or else doubt his own being. For nothing appears, when duly considered, more strange and inconceivable than the composition of human nature—a spiritual substance connected with a material body in such union that the present mode of man's existence is necessarily terminated by the dissolution of this union!

And yet spirit and matter, as far as we can judge from their known qualities and properties, are distinctly and absolutely different in their essences. This difference appears so great that we should think it impossible to unite them without destroying the nature of one or the other, were not the question determined to the contrary by matter of fact in the existence of man.

Now, as matter and spirit, so entirely different from each other, are united in the composition of man, and by such union constitute one individual being, what shadow of objection can be raised against the divinity of Christ, because it implies that two distinct natures—the human and the Divine—exist in the Redeemer of the world? For God is a Spirit; and he created man in the image of his own spirituality. Is it more strange and inconceivable, that Spirit should be united with spirit than that spirit should be united with matter?

CHAPTER V

THE PRESIDENT OF ALLEGHENY

In the realization of his dominant passion for the pastorate Dr. Ruter served with notable success two city charges, both of them in Pennsylvania, one being in Philadelphia and the other in Pittsburgh. From the General Conference of 1816 he went to the city of William Penn, being stationed at the ancient and illustrious Saint George's. This church structure was the largest in Methodism for fifty years and was looked upon as the Wesleyan Cathedral of the East. The first three Conferences of 1773-75 were held in its spacious sanctuary. Saint George's was the mother church for the extension of the societies in Philadelphia. Martin Ruter became the senior pastor of the group of three in his second year. The Philadelphia charge then had a membership of fifteen hundred and fifty-two, having enjoyed an ingathering of two hundred and eighty-one the previous year. During his pastorate there was an aggressive advance in the starting of new congregations. Saint John's, Nazareth, and Salem were

formed. Besides, many of the colored Methodists separated from the parent organization on Fourth Street and began an independent church. Plans were also well under way, so that in 1818 Saint James came into existence, and Holmsburg in 1819. But from this rich field of itinerant labor Martin Ruter had been recalled by his brethren of earlier years to become the principal of the first Methodist seminary in New England.

After Dr. Ruter decided at the General Conference of 1832 to resign as President of Augusta College, he received a call to Pittsburgh. That city was then entering a period of marked material prosperity and the churches of all denominations grew greatly in influence. He was the senior pastor at Smithfield, and early in the fall a sweeping revival of religion was under way. The large new church of Liberty Street was filled to its capacity and one hundred accessions made before Christmas. The awakening continued until spring, with an increase to two hundred additions, and spread to the town of Allegheny on the north side. The next year two pastors were associated with Dr. Ruter. The revival did not abate, and in a letter to the Rev. Wesley Browning on January 13,

1834, he reported ninety-four received on trial since Conference. The senior pastor was again the leading man of his denomination in the city and the promoter of every good work. He was active on the committee which arranged for the founding of the Pittsburgh Conference Journal, the periodical of the Methodists.

On July 17, 1833, he had gone with his brethren to their annual session at Meadville, the furthest north the Conference had ever sat. The presiding officer was Bishop Robt. R. Roberts, who, as a pastor, had preceded Dr. Ruter in old Saint George's in 1815. The Bishop had been a pioneer in northwestern Pennsylvania in 1796, and received his license to preach at Mumford's, four miles south of Meadville, in 1801. Though the Methodists had been slow in getting a foothold in the town, the first society being formed in 1826, now all the community and, in fact, all this region of the State welcomed with intense interest the one hundred and more clergymen, who were in deliberation at the county courthouse.

The one reason for the coming of the Conference to Meadville was to bring to some definite conclusion the negotiations that had been pending for two years with the Pittsburgh body, as to whether it would

abandon its enterprise of Madison College at Uniontown and assume charge of Allegheny. The decision was to be of signal moment to Martin Ruter.

At Meadville, in 1815, Allegheny College had been founded by Timothy Alden, a graduate of Harvard. The State of Pennsylvania granted a charter that the institution should be conducted on liberal principles, no person having any advantages because of his religious beliefs; it had given various donations to the total of $11,000. The citizens were loyal supporters in the organization and equipment of the college. A large, attractive building three stories in height had been erected upon a commanding site over the French Creek valley. This structure was named in honor of William Bentley, a Congregational minister of Salem, Massachusetts, who bequeathed his valuable library to Allegheny in 1820. President Alden secured other notable donations of books from Judge Winthrop, of Cambridge, and Isaiah Thomas, of Worcester, so that the college had a remarkable collection of some nine thousand well-selected volumes, the largest library for years in any institution west of the mountains.

But building, books, a single man of

exceptional talent in the faculty had not brought success to Allegheny. In that period, when the potency of some denominational organization sustained the various prosperous institutions, the college at Meadville could not muster an assured patronage. Mr. Alden, who had changed from the Congregational to the Presbyterian faith, was not able to enlist the support of the Calvinists in Pennsylvania, engrossed as they were then with the rivalries of Jefferson and Washington Colleges, south of Pittsburgh.

The Board of Trustees was willing to readjust its membership to include a score of Methodist preachers and laymen, and the Conference agreed to assume the payment of mortgages and of indebtedness to President Alden, amounting to several thousand dollars. The educational plant at Meadville, however, was estimated at this time to be worth more than $40,000. The general management of the school was gained upon a pledge that the Church would send forth two hundred live itinerant and local preachers as agents to gather the students and the resources that would make the institution permanent. But there had been another important provision named to the Board: the Pittsburgh Conference

would give its most celebrated and talented clergyman to be the president of Allegheny.

The name and fame of Martin Ruter, D.D., as a man of erudition, were once again to be capitalized for the benefit of his denomination. The new executive became the conspicuous asset of the reorganized control. The turn of affairs was not welcomed by the Pittsburgh pastor, as he frankly observes in his autobiography: "A new embarrassment arose in reference to what might be my duty. I had not only no desire to enter again upon college duties, but I earnestly desired, at least in reference to this college, to be excused from undertaking them. My brethren thought differently and urged upon me the importance to the church of improving the opportunity, now offered, in securing the advantages of a good college for the benefit of our people and the community. I therefore consented to take charge of this college for a season."

The president-elect busied himself with issuing at once an extensive prospectus of the opening of the college in September. It was announced that while Allegheny was to be under the patronage of a particular denomination, it was not to be sectarian, the trustees still being literary gentlemen of different religious persuasions. But the

institution was to be thoroughly Christian, for any system of education that left out of view the principles of revealed religion would be materially defective in the thinking of the Board. It was the preparatory department that started first, but on November 4 there was a formal and elaborate opening of the college, Dr. Ruter making a notable inaugural address.

It had been agreed that he should not remove to Meadville, until the upper classes were sufficiently advanced to require his instruction; but the immediate prosperity of the college was so pronounced that his presence was demanded while the academic year was yet in the midst of its second term. Though continuing as the pastor in Pittsburgh, the president had gone with two trustees, who were judges in northwestern Pennsylvania, before the Legislature, to support a petition for financial aid. This visit resulted in a gift of $8,000, to be paid in four years on the condition of a like sum to be furnished by the friends of the enterprise. The regime of Dr. Ruter started with members enrolled in all the four college classes, the number speedily reaching forty. By March, 1834, the figure stood at sixty, and Allegheny ranked fourth in the list of attendance upon Pennsylvania insti-

tutions. The opening year ended with one hundred and twenty students, as compared with the record in the years of the first president, when twelve was a maximum number, six the more frequent, and in some periods none at all. In the fourteen years of the operation under Timothy Alden there had been twelve graduates.

In the class of 1834 there were three Bachelors of Arts, to whom Dr. Ruter delivered on September 25 a baccalaureate message, that was widely published in religious and secular papers. The address abounded in vigorous exhortation: "Nor is it sufficient that graduates from our colleges should be constantly adding to their own acquirements, but they ought to aim at improving the arts and sciences themselves. Shall we be told that after so many improvements no room remains for any others? This, we may presume, was the cry of the indolent prior to the days of Bacon, Locke, Newton, Herschel, and others, to whose industry and skill the world has been so much indebted. It will ever be the cry of all such as wish to shun the toil of investigation; but it will never be true. Rivers may dry up, fountains may fail, but the sources of useful knowledge can never be exhausted. The progress al-

ready made, far from furnishing evidence that no more is practicable, affords the best encouragement to the adventurer in the arts, to the searcher after truth, to the lover of learning. Let this be well fixed in the mind of every student, every graduate, every scholar."

Then again: "But, besides promoting the cause of education by encouraging schools, academies, and colleges, there are other means of improvement meriting our notice which may be rendered useful not only to the rising generation but to all classes of our citizens. The encouragement of general reading, by the establishment of libraries in our towns and villages and in the populous parts of the country, would secure great advantages at a small expense. It is desirable that students, in leaving the college, should be sensible of their importance in the great work of moral and mental cultivation. The illustrious Franklin was instrumental in the formation of a library in his adopted city, which is now one of the largest and most valuable in the United States. Let those who know the value of useful knowledge, and such as feel the want of it, follow his example. If they cannot make large collections, and form libraries containing thousands of volumes,

let them gather hundreds; and where this cannot be effected, let general reading be encouraged by the circulation of tracts and periodicals. At any expense, and by all rational means, let instruction be imparted and useful knowledge diffused throughout every land."

The president was also the professor of moral science, Oriental languages and belles-lettres. The college had the practice of semiannual public examinations, which were conducted for several days and largely attended by the citizens. The work of Dr. Ruter in the classroom was highly praised by many visiting committees. He was deeply interested in all grades of education; one of the provisions in the State aid of 1834 had been that Allegheny instruct twelve students gratis in the English branches so they would be equipped to serve as teachers in the common schools. Pennsylvania was at this time putting into operation its first general law for primary education. The faculty of Allegheny was in keen sympathy with the system, and Dr. Ruter was active in the leading part Crawford County took in carrying out the spirit of the State regulations.

A novel feature joined to the college under the new administration was the

manual labor system. This provided the students with an acre of ground which they planted, or sent them into mechanical employments about the town or under the direction of the college. The experiment was broadly advertised and resulted in the attraction to Meadville of many youths of limited financial means but of intense ambition to secure an education at any cost. The type of Allegheny student was distinctive; he came largely from the homes of the common people; very often he had reached his majority when he matriculated. He came to college and was not sent, having in mind a distinct goal after the period of his training. The larger part of those in attendance were professors of religion, but this by no means meant that the majority was looking to the ministry as a profession.

The aim of the college, distinctly announced, was not to prepare preachers nor to advance the position of the denomination, but it was to bear a share in the promotion of higher education and of religious instruction, so that the youth should be bound more closely to the church. The courses of study prescribed were abreast of those taught in the leading institutions of the land. In these early years undergraduates

were trained who came to notable positions in the educational world, such as Cyrus Nutt, president of Indiana University; George W. Clark and Jonathan Hamnett, famed professors in Allegheny many decades. Professor Matthew Simpson, when he entered upon his duties in the department of natural science, reported that there was an excellent equipment in apparatus. Dr. Ruter added to the teaching staff, bringing William Burton from Wesleyan for the classics, and by his insistence getting Matthew Simpson from the ministry.

The president placed especial emphasis upon the religious life of the college. Crawford County had long enjoyed a reputation as the place of notable camp meetings. Dr. Ruter, in his first year, addressed on a Sabbath a throng of five thousand on the grounds, six miles west of Meadville. There were ingatherings of the students at the revivals each year in the town, the faculty taking a leading part in the meetings. The head of Allegheny occupied the pulpits of both the Presbyterian and the Protestant Episcopal Churches. The denominational relations were exceptionally cordial. Presbyterian business and professional men continued to be among the

most influential members of the college trustees. The town was alert and progressive, showing a keen interest in matters of reform. Dr. Ruter was foremost in the temperance campaign of the period and also was an active supporter of the Colonization Society.

The numbers in the college classes continued to grow, eight States sending representatives. But the preparatory department was also largely attended, for not a few were preparing themselves to teach in the expanding public school system of the State. The attitude of the president to his work is well revealed in the concise sketch of his entire life, which he drafted at Meadville, January 10, 1835. He wrote: "I must remain two or three years, until the college shall have acquired a degree of prosperity and permanency sufficient to secure its usefulness. So soon as that shall be accomplished it is my earnest desire and I hope I shall be permitted, to retire from Meadville and enter on duties in which I may be equally useful and enjoy more extensively the comforts of divine grace. In the meantime, O that God may give me a double portion of his Spirit, that I may at all times know and be able and willing to do my duties, whatever they may be.

Hitherto, in all the labors and trials of my life, his grace has been sufficient for me."

In 1836 the Pittsburgh Conference sent him as a delegate to the General Conference in Cincinnati. Ever moved by missionary zeal, he had grown deeply interested in the religious needs of Texas, then struggling to free itself of Mexican control. This land was largely occupied not by heathen people but persons from the United States, who had been reared under an evangelical ministry and were now outside of the church communion. Dr. Ruter, accordingly, supported the project of establishing a mission in the Southwest. He even appeared before the Missionary Society to urge the claims of Texas upon Methodism and volunteered himself for the field. Several felt that such a visitation then was premature, and the matter was held in abeyance. The enthusiasm of the president was doubtless reflected in the graduating oration of Cyrus Nutt on September 22, 1836, when he spoke on "The Cause of the Texians."

Dr. Ruter returned to Pennsylvania in time to assist in the organization of the Erie Annual Conference at Meadville, August 17, 1836, acting as secretary. The problem that constantly engrossed him

during the four years at Allegheny was the financial. The Methodists had appointed agents who traveled and collected funds. One of the pledges to the old Board in 1833 had been to raise a fund of $10,000 to endow a professorship in honor of Bishop Roberts. Besides, $2,000 must be collected yearly to guarantee a similar sum from the State treasury. All these obligations were fulfilled, but the previous debts of the Alden period absorbed much of the receipts. An effort was made to sell scholarships and even to begin a second fund for a professorship in honor of Bishop Asbury. In the educational report of the General Conference of 1836 it had been said that the friends of Allegheny College were less wealthy and extensive than those of Dickinson, though the college had fair prospects of usefulness.

The president had summoned the Conference vigorously to its legal and moral responsibilities and also laid the plan for another petition to the Legislature to secure a larger appropriation. Though the attendance of students was over one hundred, tuition fees were low. Allegheny sorely needed adequate and permanent funds. The temporary gifts grew fewer as the financial stringency of the period increased; at the same time the situation

in Texas became more favorable for the missionary enterprise. Therefore in June, 1837, Dr. Ruter took the step he had kept in view from the first, that of resigning the presidency of Allegheny after a season. He gave an account of his stewardship in the Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, July 13, 1837: "It is now four years since the Conference entered into an agreement with the trustees to patronize the college and place it as far as practicable in successful operation, taking measures for securing funds with a view to its permanent prosperity. The result of this agreement is apparent in the success that has followed. Perhaps no seminary of learning has advanced more rapidly than this has since that time. I disregarded my own inclinations in 1833 and accepted the appointment as president. I have done the utmost in my power to secure the success of the institution, keeping in view the entire interests of all its departments and the welfare of the students. But it has been my uniform intention to labor in a different sphere of usefulness whenever I could retire from the college without any injury to its interests. Believing I can now do this, and finding a door opened for me in other labors probably as useful to the Church as any I could

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and disinterested an enterprise as the mission to Texas.

In later years, after the future of Allegheny had been definitely assured by a permanent endowment, the alumni and friends, planning greatly needed improvements, did honor to the memory of the first Methodist President. There was erected Ruter Hall in 1853, as a companion to the classic Bentley Hall of 1820. A portion of the funds for the new building was secured by a unique project; a book of Original Sermons, containing the discourses of ministers of the Pittsburgh and Erie Conferences, was prepared and widely sold. A sermon by Dr. Ruter from the text, Job 14. 14, closed the volume. The amount realized from this source was some $1,800. The remaining cost was borne by the citizens. Ruter Hall became a very essential part of the college equipment. Here were housed the library and the museum for half a century. The chapel, placed on the second floor of Ruter, has been the center of the religious life and influence of Old Allegheny. From its sacred precincts have gone forth to the ends of the earth a Kingsley, a Thoburn, a Mansell, a Waugh, a Long, a Harris, and an Oldham, emulating the missionary zeal of Martin Ruter.

CHAPTER VI

THE APOSTLE TO TEXAS

In the autobiography Dr. Ruter has recorded: "In May, 1836, I attended the General Conference at Cincinnati, and felt an earnest desire to be more actively engaged in the itinerant work of the ministry. At the Conference I offered myself as a missionary to Texas, to go whenever it should be deemed a proper time for entering that field of labor. The superintendents were all consulted on the subject, and all agreed in an opinion favorable to the enterprise. It was believed that the unsettled condition of the country, in reference to its political relations, was not suitable for the immediate establishment of a mission, but that in all probability it might be within a few months. All were favorable to my appointment when the proper time should arrive."

Because of the many Americans who had migrated into Texas, while still a Mexican province, there was a lively interest on the part of the Church in the spiritual welfare of those without the means

of grace in their new homes. The Mexican rule was unfavorable to Protestantism, and no religion but the Catholic was recognized. Nevertheless, workers had gone from the Methodist connection into the forbidden territory, even as early as 1824 to the Austin colony. Henry Stevenson was formally named by the Mississippi Conference in 1835, as a missionary to Texas, and the camp meetings held that year were in violation of religious laws.

The decisive battle of San Jacinto, April 21, 1836, changed the outlook. A nation-wide sympathy had been aroused for the Texans after the massacres of the Alamo and Goliad. The government of the United States held itself scrupulously aloof, though the proclaimed republic was known to desire annexation at some future date. The Missionary Society in New York received appeals for missionaries in 1836, while the settlers endeavored to meet their spiritual needs by getting the supplies of the Sabbath School Union and the Bible Society. The Texas Constitution of April, 1837, was a liberal instrument, granting freedom of religion and of the press. It was evident that there were many communities ready for the gospel message. There now seemed less prospect of con-

tinued war with Mexico, and the Methodist bishops felt the time had come for taking systematic measures to evangelize Texas, the youngest republic on the American continent.

In April Bishop Hedding made the appointment of Martin Ruter to be the superintendent of the Texas mission. Robert Alexander, of the Mississippi Conference, and Littleton Fowler, of the Tennessee, had previously volunteered and were named as his assistants. In a letter of April 16, 1837, to the Bishop, Dr. Ruter wrote: "I have determined to go to Texas in conformity with the appointment, contained in your letter. The college can now prosper in other hands, and to me it appears that I could do more good in Texas, or in some mission than in the college. If I can be released for a while, and be permitted to labor in the more active duties of the ministry, I shall be thankful."

After tendering his resignation on June 21 to the trustees of Allegheny College, Dr. Ruter quickly made his plans for departure. A flatboat was prepared at Meadville, and in July he embarked on French Creek with his family and possessions. This was not an unusual method of travel. Alfred Brunson, one of the stalwarts of the

Pittsburgh Conference and the "Silas Hopewell" of the Radical discussions of 1829, when appointed a missionary to the Northwest, had gone from Meadville by boat in 1836 on a twenty-five-hundred-mile voyage at an actual cost of $6.50. A great throng of citizens and students assembled at the Port of Mead to bid an affectionate farewell to the apostle to Texas and his party. Missionary hymns were sung and prayers offered, while all the town wished him a fervent Godspeed in his courageous enterprise.

The boat with its precious freight made its way down French Creek to Franklin, thence by the Allegheny to Pittsburgh, where it floated into the broad Ohio. By this same route the Rev. Timothy Alden, the founder of Allegheny College, had made his way from the East, up to Meadville in 1815. Zion's Herald printed severe criticisms of the mode of travel of Dr. Ruter, since it is said that by oar and pole he propelled his craft as far as Marietta. But the former college president was in excellent health and vigor at this time, and the season of the year was most propitious for such a primitive style of locomotion. Moreover, it afforded him a chance to tie up his boat at nights, wherever there were villages and

collections of people on the banks, and there hold evangelistic services.

The trip was so planned that he reached Steubenville while the Pittsburgh Conference was in session. It was an inspiring experience to join in the services of the week with his brethren and the final prayer of the Conference was offered by him as a fitting benediction. Resuming his trip, he visited Augusta and its familiar scenes and reached Cincinnati, August 20. Here he laid in a stock of supplies, essential to his new field of labor—hymn books, Disciplines, Bibles and Sunday school literature. Dr. Charles Elliott, editor of the Western Christian Advocate, sent a large supply of the church paper in advance to Texas, to announce the coming of the missionary. Thence the party moved on to New Albany, Indiana, as the first objective of the journey. A home was made for Mrs. Ruter, who was to reside here until the mission should become established.

The Indiana Annual Conference had its session at New Albany at this time, and the new superintendent to a foreign field held important consultations with Bishops Roberts and Soule about the work ahead. However, since New Orleans was being scourged at this season with yellow fever,

Dr. Ruter delayed his departure for a few weeks, visiting Kentucky towns in the interest of his cause. At length he took steamer down the Ohio and the Mississippi and was a conspicuous passenger in the company. An untimely demise required him to read the burial service, and on the Sabbath day he held two preaching services, displaying here, as everywhere, the dominant evangelistic note of his life.

Some persons of little faith had opposed the program of the Church for Texas, alleging it to be a land of banditti and rebels. But the true Wesleyan made answer that he must preach the gospel to every creature; if that creature is bad, the need of the gospel is doubly great. There were those who tried to discourage our missionary, magnifying the distance and the danger of Texas; the confident reply of Dr. Ruter was, "Heaven is no further from Texas than from Pennsylvania." He went to his new field at the age of fifty-two, with the same enthusiasm that attended him, a youth of twenty, appointed to Montreal. A holy zeal consumed him. He was literally a flaming evangel in the Southwest. Within five months he had wrought a work which, had there been no other service of his lifetime to his church, would have

assured him a permanent place as a maker of Methodism in America.

The superintendent of Texas met Robert Alexander on November 23 at Games Ferry on the Sabine River, en route to the Mississippi Conference. All night long he planned with his assistant as to the campaign ahead. The immediate burden of the following months fell almost entirely upon Dr. Ruter. His second assistant, Littleton Fowler, was the chaplain of the Senate at Houston. The district for evangelism was practically the whole republic of Texas. A letter back to New Albany thus forecast the future: "I hope to have by next April a good foundation for Methodism in Texas; but all depends on the aid of a gracious Providence. From all appearances, I believe it is the time to commence missionary labors here, and I rejoice in the glorious privilege of doing good among the destitute, who are glad and anxious to hear the gospel preached. After spending the summer in the North I must try to get some churches built, some schoolhouses commenced, and have a foundation laid for a college, and also have an abundance of tracts, Bibles, and other books scattered over the country."

A page from the journal of Dr. Ruter,

describing his activities for the first month, proves how faithfully he redeemed the time:

Crossed the Sabine on November 23, 1837. Friday, 24. Rode to San Augustine and preached to a small assembly in a schoolhouse. Saturday, 25. Rode to Ingleduve's house, within eight miles of Nacogdoches. Sabbath, 26. Rode to Nacogdoches, preached two sermons in Masonic Hall. Continued journey and Wednesday reached Mr. Mitchell's house and preached. Continued journey until Friday. December 1. Reached Washington on the Brazos, and preached at a schoolhouse. Saturday, 2. Preached again. Sunday, 3. Attended Sunday school and spoke; heard a Baptist preacher at eleven, and then preached at three, met the class and received one into Society. Felt encouraged in the work of the Lord. O may Christ's kingdom rapidly advance in Texas! Amen. Monday, 4. Rode 30 miles to Mr. Foster's. Tuesday, 5. Rode to Mr. Ayers', five miles. Wednesday, 6. Rode to Mr. Kenny's. Thursday, 7. To San Felipe. Friday, 8. To Mercer's neighborhood on the Colorado. This ride was through a thirty-five mile prairie, amidst heavy rains. Saturday, 9. Preached at Capt. Hurd's. Sabbath, 10. Preached at eleven, and at three, to the blacks, twelve in number. At candlelight met a few in class, and formed a society of nine members. Monday, 11. Went to Fort Bend, over a prairie of thirty-six miles. Tuesday, 12. Very difficult traveling on account of violent storm. Wednesday, 13. Came to Houston, twenty-five miles; here remained a week, became acquainted with the place, people,

members of the Legislature, officers, etc. Sunday, 17. Preached in Congress Hall. Afternoon with Brother Fowler, formed a Sunday School Society. Wednesday, 20. Went to Cartwright's. Thursday, 21. Went to San Felipe. Friday, 22. Rode to Rev. J. W. Kenny's, through the prairie lands, against the north wind. Saturday, 23. Visited Brother Ayers and returned.

Everywhere the missionary received a hearty welcome. The country, however, bore mute witness to the devastation of the Mexican army a few months earlier. Even in many districts that had not been occupied the houses were cabins without glass windows and with little furniture. The centers of population were widely scattered, but the tide of immigration had already begun to set in steadily. Dr. Ruter was ready to go to the further settlements on the San Antonio River, though in these parts travel was done in companies of six or more fully armed. Our messenger of peace was firmly resolved, as for himself, when alone or with companions, he would carry no weapons "made with hands." His general purpose was to learn by personal observation the condition of the inhabitants, and what settlements would readily receive preaching. Ignorance, superstition, and godlessness had long held sway. Only an occasional local preacher or a traveling

clergyman in former years had conducted a religious service.

Now on all sides the evidences multiplied that the people wished the gospel to be preached and churches to be established. Within sixty days Dr. Ruter had traveled twelve hundred miles, and in a territory where there had not been a single Protestant Church he organized four circuits, with Houston, Washington, Trinity, and San Augustine as centers. A dangerous trip was taken in late January, when under the escort of three men armed with rifles, he went to Bastrop on the Colorado, being the first preacher to push that far south. He rode through a region where marauding Indians roamed, passing grim evidences of their deeds in several graves of murdered travelers. The visit resulted in the starting of a society of fifteen members, and the preacher counted the peril of the way to the glory of God. The judgment of our American observer on the contemporary political situation possesses suggestive interest. On February 13, 1838, he wrote to Mrs. Ruter: "It is pretty well ascertained that the Mexicans are making no preparations for invading Texas. They are broken and divided among themselves; they are very poor, have but little courage and most of their peasantry

are in as great bondage to the wealthy as are the Russian serfs. If no other nation meddles with Texas besides Mexico, I am convinced there is nothing to fear."

The winter of these labors was unusually severe for that latitude; it was succeeded by an early and warm spring. Climate and weather made no change in the plans of evangelization. The superintendent spared himself no fatigue and turned aside for no storm. But ever, daily, on his big horse, at a sweeping trot, he rode, visiting towns, communities, and families, preaching wherever he could secure hearers, even though the audience was but a single family. Every village on his route was visited with the hope of arousing an interest in the cause of religion and effecting eventually an organization. Wherever there was a Macedonian cry he responded. Though wise and prudent hitherto in husbanding his strength, there was no prudence now in the face of the vastness and the urgency of the need before him.

One of the new parishioners in the republic bears this witness: "He would ride several miles in a day, and preach sermons sometimes to not more than fifteen or twenty persons, in a little smoky cabin, with as much energy and fervor as I should have

expected had he been addressing thousands in a splendid church. His work was his pleasure. It was common with him to ask permission to preach in places where he would stop in traveling. More than one housekeeper can testify to the interest with which she collected her family after supper to hear the word of instruction from his benevolent lips."

The region traversed in Texas was the interior from Sabine County to the Colorado on the southwest. After reaching the western limits, he again returned to Independence, having secured the names of three hundred Methodists living in the republic who were to form the nucleus of the new church. Quarterly conferences were held and various sections revisited which needed the superintendent's presence. Within ninety days fifteen hundred miles had been traveled and twenty societies formed. In San Augustine, after his first visit, $4,000 were subscribed for a house of worship; several church structures were soon in process of erection. In Washington his enthusiasm for the building of a church was so contagious that the work was steadily pushed until the building was ready to be used by him for divine service in the early spring.

The practical qualities of the man were shown in the system and the care with which he secured sites and had deeds prepared for the ground upon which to erect churches and schoolhouses. However, none of the material prospects of this promising land lured him, mindful as he was of his appointment for moral and religious purposes alone. Yet the beauty of the country, of which he expressed the liveliest appreciation again and again, furnished a solace for his strenuous labors. The plains, with their distant horizon and covered with the flowers of spring, seemed to him an enchanted land. "It appeared indeed a fit place for the assemblies of angels, brightened as it was with the sunbeams of heaven; no human voice, no hum of business, the world shut out, as out of a closet. But who can doubt that God is there! Who that is devout can fail to experience his presence, and to enjoy communion with the Divine Spirit?" In a letter to his daughter, Mrs. S. R. Campbell, he expressed his preference for the region, watered by the Colorado, and spoke of the river as a beautiful one, not much larger than French Creek in Pennsylvania but somewhat deeper.

One of the most important visitations of Dr. Ruter was the week spent at Houston,

during the session of the Legislature. He preached twice in Congress Hall and made the acquaintance of President Lamar, General Sam Houston, and other officials. He gained their support, together with that of other leading men, for his plan of an institution of learning. Liberal offers were made by several large landowners to the amount of several thousand acres for the endowment of the school if Dr. Ruter could assume direction of it. He drew up a form of charter for its incorporation which he expected his friends to present at the next Texas Congress. The name contemplated was Bastrop University, to be located in the town on the Colorado. In a future trip to the Eastern and Northern cities our scholar planned to present the cause of education in the Southwest and secure gifts in support of the university so that the youth of Texas could obtain the best facilities for instruction within their own borders.

The evangelistic work was pushed with feverish energy and the conviction grew more intense that to meet the irreligious and profligate conditions of the land, many more preachers were needed, and "preaching beyond measure." Dr. Ruter reached the decision that at least twelve more mis-

sionaries must be speedily appointed to Texas. He would go to New York to lay the situation before the spring meeting of the bishops and endeavor to have the field manned on a large and adequate scale. The start was made, the Brazos crossed, but the superintendent was already a stricken man. On April 4 a light fever attacked him, a resultant of the fatigue of his severe campaign and his constant riding in the sun. He had traversed a distance of twenty-two hundred miles at a fatal expense to a man of his years and previous habits of life. The fever was not regarded seriously at first, though it was increased by the activities he still maintained. His private journal in April affords a pathetic record of the steady weakening of his powers:

Tuesday, April 3. Rode to Mr. Cochran's. This day makes me fifty-three years of age and I this day set out to devote myself more than ever to God; first, by more prayer; second, by more attention to the Scriptures; third, by general reading and meditation. Wednesday, 4. Rode to Mr. Ayers's. Thursday, 5. Rode to Mr. Cochran's. Friday, 6. Rode to Mr. Bracy's. Saturday, 7. Being afflicted with fever, rode to Brother Kenny's. Sunday, 8. Too ill to preach, Brother Kenny took my place. Sunday evening. Find myself better and my mind stayed on God, to whose service I hope to be devoted forever. Monday, 9. Rode to Mr. Ayers's; still unwell,

and under temptation. Tuesday, 10. To Mr. Rabb's. Wednesday, 11. To Mr. Kesee's. Feel somewhat improved in health. Thursday, 12. To Mr. Hall's. Trying to recoup my strength. Feel myself relieved in trusting in God, my only helper. Saturday, 14. Rode to Washington, and found letters from home, gave great comfort. Consult physicians. Sunday, 15. Rode to Hall's and preached. Received one sinner on trial. Monday, 16. Amidst affliction rode to Mr. Ayers's. Wednesday, 18. Rode to Brother Kesee's. Thursday, 19. Set off for Red River. Found my illness increasing. Friday, 20. Reached a Mr. River's. Saturday, 21. So ill I could not go on. Now here I am with a threatening fever among strangers. But my trust is in the Most High; his mercies are abundant, and live or die, O, let me do and suffer his blessed will. I commit to him myself and dear family, wife, and children, now and forever, Amen. Sunday, 22. Disease settling upon my lungs. Without medical advice, seemed judicious to return to Washington. Rode twenty-eight miles to Mr. Fanthorp's. Monday, 23. Rode to Washington, seventeen miles. Feel much fatigued but comforted with the goodness of God. O, how unsearchable is his wisdom and his ways past finding out!

Back at Washington, he received the best of medical attention, but typhoid pneumonia had developed. All was done that was within the power of devoted friends. His assistant, Robert Alexander, was with him until the end. He relates that in the week after the return to Washington he found

Dr. Ruter quite ill, "but in a happy frame of mind, perfectly resigned to the will of God. I never before witnessed such patience under affliction. We frequently engaged in prayer with him, and his whole soul seemed engaged in the exercise. At his request I preached for him one evening, a few friends being present. I hesitated a moment when he first proposed it, but his injunction was, 'The gospel is a treasure. This is what I need.'"

His composure, his faith, his resignation during weeks of suffering in a strange land were the fruits of his ideal Christian character. The only concern he expressed was for the prosperity of the mission in Texas and of Zion at large. He said shortly before his last moments: "Why be impatient? I gave my family to God when I left them, and the way to heaven is as short and plain from Texas as from any other spot." He lingered until May 16 and then passed to his eternal reward.

The heroic death of Dr. Ruter, falling at his post as a faithful watchman on the walls of Zion, sent a sensation of keen sorrow throughout Methodism, in so many portions of which his conspicuous and devoted services and his exceptional Christian graces had endeared him to all. The

news came to Boston at the time of the session of the New England Conference. It was first reported at the morning services on the Sabbath and references were made in the eloquent sermons of Dr. Wilbur Fisk and Dr. Henry Bascom to the translation of the servant of God in far-off Texas. The Methodist people of the city were profoundly moved, for many of them had sat under the ministry of Martin Ruter. When Bishop Soule on Monday morning made the official announcement of the death, his voice was so trembling with grief as scarcely to be audible, while those of the Conference who knew Dr. Ruter personally freely gave way to their sorrow. Not a few of the members of this body had been converted to the Christian life through his agency, and the resolutions passed upon his death bore testimony to their affectionate high estimate of his talents and his contributions to his Church and the cause of the Redeemer. In the memorial services later Dr. Ruter was honored as a missionary hero and placed in the glorious company of Melville Cox, who gave his life for Africa, and Dr. Coke, who had died on his way to labor in the island of Ceylon.

In Texas the grief was most poignant. Dr. Ruter had come to be looked upon as

the one who was to raise the republic to the moral, religious, and literary rank of a respectable, established nation; his sudden and unforeseen demise was felt to be a national calamity. The remains were placed in the cemetery at Washington, the grave inclosed by a stone wall and covered with a marble slab. Through the fidelity of his assistant, Robert Alexander, this inscription was placed to his memory: "Thirty-seven years an Itinerant Minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and Superintendent of the first Mission of that Church in the Republic of Texas. He was respectable for his talents, distinguished for his learning and sincerely and devoutly pious."

H. S. Thrall, in the History of Methodism in Texas, says, "Among the hundreds of men who have labored in Texas since this time not one has exceeded Dr. Ruter in learning, zeal, unwearied labor, and unflinching fidelity to duty." An envoy from the republic to Washington a few years later said, "The efforts of the Methodist ministry have done more toward securing respect for the laws, submission to the courts of justice, regard to the sanctity of oaths, and, consequently, the general peace and good order of society than any other influence that has been exerted."

In Westminster Abbey the well-known tribute to the Wesleys declares, "God buries his workmen, but carries on his work." The death of Dr. Ruter became a challenge to the Church. His earliest letters from Texas, published in the Advocates, sounded a clarion call for recruits. Thus the triumphant exit from his labors sealed the obligation of Methodism to consummate the mission. In his old Ohio Conference there were six volunteers for the Southwest. Now in 1838 a district with seven preachers and four hundred and fifty members was organized. The first Texas Conference met in 1840 at Rutersville, the General Conference having just created that body. There were nineteen traveling preachers, three districts, and eighteen hundred members in the new field. Rutersville was the site of the college that had been founded to the memory of the apostle to Texas. The school received aid from the republic and private sources, but, refused a charter as a denominational institution, its future was handicapped so that the outbreak of the Civil War saw the closing of its doors. It seems peculiarly appropriate that for many years Rutersville was a great center for camp meetings.

Charles Elliott, of the Western Christian

Advocate, a close personal friend of Dr. Ruter, preached a notable memorial sermon at New Albany, Indiana, on July 8, 1838, on the theme, "A Prince and Great Man Has Fallen." His tribute was: "Every prince is not a great man, nor is every great man a prince. Dr. Ruter was both. He was a prince in that he filled some of the most important offices which the Church intrusts to the ablest and most faithful ministers. He was a great man, great in goodness, in literary attainments, and in usefulness. To be good and useful form the highest degree of greatness."

Nowhere in the land did the intelligence of Dr. Ruter's death bring a more severe shock than to Allegheny College. A student committee consisting of Jonathan Hamnett, Gordon Battelle, and Moses Crow—names of future distinction in Methodism—brought in resolutions at the college chapel testifying to their appreciation of the permanent work wrought by him at Allegheny. At the student request, the president, Homer J. Clark, preached a memorial sermon on July 24 from the text in Isa. 62. 1, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness." The preacher said

that the character and ministerial life of Dr. Ruter for nearly half a century was a practical comment on this passage of Scripture. "From early youth to an advanced age, he devoted his time, his talents, his influence as a minister and a teacher to the service of the Church, and always for a compensation inadequate to the wants of his family. He could say at all times, with the apostle, 'Lo, I have left all and followed thee.' God is witness and ye are witness how holily and unblamably he behaved himself among you, who have so often sat under his spiritual ministrations, toward whom for several years he performed the duties of a faithful pastor, laboring with you day and night, watching for your souls as one conscious that he must give an account. It was the constraining love of Christ and a deep and tender compassion for the souls of men that had sent him to Texas. Who of the young men of the college are willing to tread in the footsteps of Ruter, to devote their ardor and strength to the work of the Christian ministry? Who are willing to go and supply his place in the missionary field?"

CHAPTER VII

THE MAN OF GOD

THE Spirit of God came early upon Martin Ruter. The "serious impressions" in the matter of a religious life that he had at the age of three do not seem so extraordinary in the light of the marked spiritual gifts that the lad of fifteen possessed. There was a rare Christian mother in the Vermont home. Her pastor's tribute ran: "She was truly a mother in Israel. She lived within speaking distance of paradise and kept up a constant communication." The boy, Martin, learned thoroughly at her knees the joy and the reality of the abiding witness of the Spirit in his life. It brought him into manhood with a character so estimable, so serene and so unsullied, that he forever remains in that select group of ideal Methodist ministers, whose genuine righteousness established them as the salt of the earth for all generations. The moral image of God, drawn upon his heart in the early days, continued strong and clear through every passing year. The consuming zeal of youth was reflected and reen-

forced in the white heat of an absolute consecration of life, past its meridian.

Dr. Ruter was a man of good personal appearance, rather above the middle size, well formed, and very erect. His countenance was said to have been one expressive of power, somewhat bordering on sternness. He had easy and graceful manners. In conversation he was affable and lively. A wide range of subjects in politics, religion, and science was familiar to him, so that he excelled in informal discussions at social gatherings. He was also decidedly gifted with taste in the fine arts. He was highly appreciative of painting, poetry, and music. His habit was not to sing other than sacred music, yet martial selections made a peculiar appeal to him.

Dr. Ruter was strong in the friendships that he established. As a young minister he had the gracious bearing that won him much popularity and admiration. In pastoral visitations he was eminently happy. There was no home entered in which he did not put its members at their ease quite unconsciously; he was a true shepherd of souls and of hearts.

In June, 1805, the Rev. Martin Ruter was married to Miss Sybil Robertson, of Chesterfield, New Hampshire. There were

two children of this union, who died in early years. The wife lapsed into invalidism and passed away in 1808. A year and more later, he was married to Miss Ruth Young, of Concord, New Hampshire. There were eight children of the second union, seven of them surviving the father. A son, A. W. Ruter, was a professor of languages in Allegheny College, then later in Transylvania University. The family was a most interesting one, and the father's position in it quite ideal. The education of his boys and girls became a matter of deepest concern to him. He first taught them with care the principles and practice of religion, then instructed them in science and useful knowledge. They were reared to shun the fashionable frivolities of the day and to seek after no useless attainments. In all his busiest years Dr. Ruter devoted hours to talks with them on subjects of morality, religion, literature, and science. His daughter bears loving witness that his watchfulness never flagged, and, like a sentinel, he was ever at the post of duty. He possessed a tender affection for them, so that when a child was about to start upon a journey his hand was the last extended in farewell and his voice whispered the parting injunction, "Do not forget

to pray," or "Remember, you have named your Saviour." He kept up an extensive correspondence with each of them through the years, sending messages of admonition and encouragement.

In the pulpit Dr. Ruter spoke everywhere with a high degree of acceptance to his congregations. He possessed much more than in a common degree the qualities necessary to an interesting and useful preacher. In his early ministry he showed much readiness of speech and fluency. This gained him speedily in New England his repute as an orator. He possessed from his wide reading and studies an excellent vocabulary. His voice was clear and agreeable. It is true that in his later years he fell into a certain uniformity of cadence in his delivery, but this was not unpleasant to his hearers. His preaching has been described as consciously adapted to please, to instruct, and to awaken. He aimed to present the simple doctrines of the gospel in all their purity and fullness and to bring them to have effect upon the heart and conscience of the pew.

His sermons were to some extent imaginative, but more likely to be historical, doctrinal, and argumentative. The memoir of the Pittsburgh Conference quaintly ob-

serves: "In the pulpit he was solid, grave, warm, and dignified, generally listened to with pleasure, always with profit." For the most part he was not controversial in the pulpit; only in the years in New England had he been forced by the exigencies of the time to theological disputations. The preacher's desk was not the place chosen by him to make a display of his learning, even though he had the ability to read the Scriptures in nine languages. His mission was to preach the word of God, as the most effective message, backed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Having learned intimately in the days of his youth of the doctrines, practices, and writings of Wesley, Martin Ruter was a thorough Methodist. He had no part in the revolutionary movements within the Church in the late twenties. He was deeply loyal to the discipline and the polity of his denomination. In theology he was uniformly orthodox. His doctrine was sound. He had no taste for wild speculations in thought or for matters of doubt.

This man of God appears in his day and generation as one who had been given his treasure in an earthly vessel, "that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." It has pleased Dr. Nathan

Bangs in the History of the Methodist Episcopal Church to speak captiously of this son of New England. He opines that it was not pretended that the mind of Dr. Ruter was of the first order, "that for strength of intellectual powers and for depth and variety of learning, many others stood far in advance" of our self-taught scholar. Dr. Bangs also charges that as the president of Augusta and of Allegheny he did not shine with the brilliancy equal to general expectations. There surely is little evidence that can be advanced to substantiate this imputation upon the success of Dr. Ruter as a college executive. All of the testimony is strong to the contrary, while the same causes were operative in each instance that led to his resignation, namely, the failure of adequate financial support by the Methodist Conferences pledged to sustain the institutions and his consuming desire to engage in evangelistic and missionary work.

The salient characteristics of our preacher and educator stand forever fixed in bold outline. He was a man of untiring energy; his work was done with decision and precision. No contemporary was more conscientious and efficient in the economy of his time. Few, if any, have surpassed him

in results gained as the fruit of such assiduity and system. He does not have his superior in Methodism for inflexible integrity. His constant rule was to shun every appearance of fault or wrong. At each period of his life he was moved by a high sense of duty. He pleased not himself. He gave himself at last for a people, unchurched and far remote from all those whom he had loved and associated with through the years.

The secret of it all is plain—the love of God shed abroad richly in his heart. His one concern for every day was that the grace of the Master should continue to be vouchsafed to him. The crowning motive of his life was the evangelistic, the one ambition that he might save souls. Bishop Hedding, his classmate in the ministry, testifies very tenderly, "I never knew Martin Ruter to fail of success in any circuit or station." He was blessed abundantly in the conviction and conversion of the many who heard him. He was an itinerant always before he was a college president. He put the stress on religion rather than literature. In him there is a beautiful mingling of love and religious zeal. As he strove diligently to make himself conformable unto the image which is in Christ,

he has become fashioned before our eyes into an acceptable and worthy type of Christian personality.

The Methodists of America, North and South, have in this twentieth century revived the memory of Dr. Ruter by a gracious deed of love. The Rev. C. L. Spencer conceived the idea of removing the remains from the resting place in Washington, Texas, to Navasota. Bishop Mallalieu gave the project his effective support and the funds were secured to rear a granite shaft to mark the new grave. Here on December 3, 1901, the dedication of the monument was fittingly made by Bishop Joyce. The simple but eloquent inscription reads: "Ruter, an honored preacher, author, teacher, and founder of the Western Book Concern of the M. E. Church."